

MEDITATIONS

ON

LIFE

AND ITS

RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

Translated from the German

BY

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Published by Her Majesty's Gracious Permission.



LONDON:
TRÜBNER AND CO., PATERNOSTER ROW.
1863.

London:

EMILY FAITHFULL, PRINTER AND PUBLISHER IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY.

VICTORIA PRESS, 83A, FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.

TO

H. R. H. THE PRINCESS LOUIS OF HESSE,

PRINCESS ALICE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,

WHOSE YOUNG LIFE

HAS ALREADY GIVEN EVIDENCE OF THE

RELIGIOUS EARNESTNESS AND SINCERITY INCULCATED

IN THESE MEDITATIONS,

THIS TRANSLATION IS, WITH THE GRACIOUS PERMISSION OF

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS,

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

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MEDITATIONS.

REFLECTIONS ON THE OPENING OF A NEW YEAR.

Thousands have fallen at my side,
  Struck by the hand of death; yet still
I stand; still feel with joy the tide
  Of fresh life through my being thrill.
Who am I? Wherefore dost Thou spare?
  Why thus, Oh God, my fate direct?
Why guard me with such wondrous care,
  And with Thy tender thought protect?

A careless dweller on thine earth,
  I, Lord, am nothing—Thou art all!
Oh make my future life more worth,
  Throw o'er the past a covering pall.
This year I'll consecrate to Thee—
  In all things seek Thy will to know,
Righteousness all my joy shall be,
  The good seed only will I sow.

Be what thou wilt, oh untried year!
  God guardeth me, and all I love.
Shall future days bring peril near?
  Shall all my hours grief-laden prove?
Or shall my better star's mild ray
  Shine forth, and fortune's gifts o'erflow?
Alike to me! Care, doubt, away!
   Whate'er is best will God bestow.—

(PHILIPP. iv. 4—7.)

THE opening of a new year is a solemn epoch to all of us; it is, as it were, a day consecrated to our silent

hopes, our most secret wishes. Here the solemn peals of the early morning bells announce the inauguration of a new period of time; there the sound of trumpets and bassoons, and sacred hymns, herald in the first morning of the year. Merry troops of girls and boys greet it with joyous shouts. Friends and acquaintances interchange cordial wishes; pious children pray with greater fervour for the welfare of their benefactors, nations for that of their rulers.

So, to all the transition from one year to another is of solemn import: to the sovereign on his throne, as to the beggar in his hovel; to the industrious father of a family in the midst of his labours, as to the mother in the midst of her children; to the old man in his easy-chair, as to the youth, who, full of hopes and expectations, longs to launch himself into the stormy world.

Behind us lies our past life, like a long dream; before us the future, like an unknown country, veiled in impenetrable mists. Gloomy minds are filled with melancholy forebodings, cheerful hearts with bright hopes. Each one looks forward to what the next days or months may bring; each one would fain catch a glimpse of the fate which lies concealed in the dim future, as the seed lies germinating in the dark bosom of the wintry earth.

Each one resumes in the new year his usual task, and sketches out his plans and projects with indefinite fears and expectations.

The Christian also commences a new course: he

also is filled with fears and hopes. But with what sentiments does he go forth to encounter at the beginning of a new year, the mysterious future and his unknown fate? He seeks a short interval of solitude, in which his soul may possess itself. He lifts up his spirit in fervent prayer to the Almighty Father, and His all-embracing love, and his lips stammer forth the thanks of his heart. He says: "I am not worthy of the infinite mercy and love which Thou hast lavished upon me. What I am, and what I possess, I owe to Thee! Thou hast guided me through a thousand dangers, many of which were not even known to me. Thou wert present when my sorrows and tribulations were greatest. Thou hast watched over me and mine while we slept. Thy warning hand has made itself felt whenever we have erred. Whatever has befallen me in the past year, I know it was for my good; and even if there be things, the bearing of which upon my true welfare I cannot as yet discover, I am convinced that in the future, I shall see it more clearly. For the holy order according to which Thou rulest the world, is wise and wonderful, and directed towards the highest happiness of those whom it has pleased Thee to create. Yea, I also belong to this holy order of the universe, which is eternal and indestructible as Thou art. I, also, am counted by Thee as a member of it; and even the misfortunes that have befallen me, even those that I have not brought down upon myself by my own imprudence, which I had no power to ward off, which have lacerated my heart, and caused it to bleed—even these have been

included in the order of Thy world from all eternity. And whatsoever Thou doest, is well done!"

Oh Lord, my God, whose mercy is inexhaustible; Oh, Father! Father, full of unutterable goodness, do not abandon me! Do not abandon me or those who belong to me! Do not abandon us, even when we err! For though Thy children go astray, they ever turn back weeping, to throw themselves on Thy mercy.

Yea, oh Lord, my God, Thou hast helped me so far, and Thou wilt help me further. I look up to Thee with unswerving confidence. As a feeble child clings, full of love and trust, to mother and father, so I cling to Thee. I will follow the teachings of Thy holy Son, of my Saviour Jesus Christ, who brought us Thy word; and then await with calm resignation whatever Thou mayst have ordained for me and my dear ones in future years.

I trust in Thee, and, therefore, I ask naught of Thee. Thou alone seest what is good for me and mine, and Thou wilt give and withhold what Thou deemest conducive to our welfare.

Yet, O Omniscient God, Thou knowest that many ardent wishes agitate my heart: many insignificant wishes, which I would disclose to no one, for fear of being misjudged; and others which I would fain utter aloud with burning tears, crying, oh, may they be fulfilled! Thou knowest them, Father, though I dare not name them to Thee; yet, my highest happiness depends upon their fulfilment.

Nay, nay! what words have I spoken? Am I then

wiser than the Allwise? Can I know beforehand what will constitute my future happiness—I, who cannot even tell what will befall me the next moment of my life? Nay, nay, all-wise and loving Father, I can but stammer forth my wishes like an ignorant child; and Thou wilt fulfil those which Thou knowest will be truly beneficial to me. Into Thy faithful, fatherly keeping I resign myself, and all those who are dear to my heart. We belong to Thee; Thou alone art our God.

Well, then, oh, my heart, discard all useless cares, all vain hopes, and await with calm trust the gifts of the beneficent Providence, that watches over thee and thine. Be not too hopeful, neither too anxious as regards the future. Either may prove injurious to thee, and may exercise a baneful influence on the plans and projects thou mayst entertain.

Be not too hopeful! Nothing is more likely to mislead a man than that over-confident expectation of success which will allow him to harbour no doubt as to the realization of what he desires, because it has some probability in its favour. This leads him to make all his arrangements precipitately, and blinded by his hopes, he lets himself be seduced into foolish undertakings. What the heart desires, it trusts will be realized, forgetting how often it has been disappointed in its expectations.

Be not too hopeful; lest were hope to fail, thou shouldst lose courage, and sink into despondency. In hoping too confidently, thou art only preparing for thyself bitter moments, which thou mightst have

avoided. Disappointed hopes ever leave a sting behind, which makes us unjust to our fellow men, and even rebellious against Providence. Yet we alone are to blame for having given ourselves up to idle dreams, and to building castles in the air.

Hope not too confidently! For this keeps thee unprepared for many a misfortune that may possibly befall thee. He who feeds his mind upon expectations of too bright a character, renders it effeminate and powerless to cope with the storms that may burst forth unexpectedly from all sides. The Christian sage walks forward to meet the future, prepared for all things, armed with calm courage and resignation, as the brave soldier marches forward to meet an unknown enemy. With his eyes fixed on Heaven, the Christian receives evil, like good, gratefully, as coming from the hand of the Eternal Ruler of the universe. Whether the next month is to bring him a wreath of unlooked for joys, or a coffin wherein one most dear to him lies dead: he awaits both alike with Christian fortitude.

Hope confidently for those joys only, which thou preparest for thyself, through the virtue and uprightness of thy life. Such hope will seldom be disappointed. The virtues which thou mayst exercise are sure to bring thee joy even in this world. The evil habits, the faults of character which thou mayst conquer, will reconcile those to thee who now perhaps look upon thee with contempt and detestation. The good qualities which thou mayst acquire; thy cordial manners; thy disinterested desire to be of use to others;

thy endeavour always to say as much good of others as thou canst; thy zeal in attending to the business entrusted to thee; thy repugnance to, and withdrawal from, all impure things—will gain for thee the love of those who now regard thee with indifference. After all, what constitutes the most lasting happiness of man? Self-contentment, and the consequent esteem and friendship of every good person. If thou be not happy, who hinders thee from being so? Why wilt thou not divest thyself of faults, of which thou art fully conscious, which repel other men, and by which thou despoilest thyself of peace of mind, of the calm peace of God? Why dost thou foolishly look to others for a happiness which thou canst rear most lastingly with thine own hands? Perhaps thou findest it too difficult to reform; thou hast not the courage to begin. Well, then, I can no longer feel pity for thee; thou lackest the resolution to be happy.

Hope only for so much consideration and well-being as thou canst acquire by thine own industry and exertions. Count only upon thyself and upon God's blessing; count not on the assistance of other men, on happy chances, on blind accidents, such as an unexpected inheritance, or a prize in the lottery, that may bestow riches upon thee. The more completely a man relies upon himself alone, the less dependent he is on the favours of others: the greater, freer, nobler, he is, and the more capable of all that is good. Why, then, dost thou wish for increased consideration in the eyes of others, or for the acquisition of wealth? Is it not

because to possess these would flatter thy vanity? Unworthy man! to gratify thy secret pride, thou wouldst have God to perform miracles, and to regulate anew the order of the world! He who cannot be content and happy with that which he is able to acquire by his own labour and cheerful industry, verily, he is not worthy of greater gifts of fortune!

Hope only for so much satisfaction in the world as thou mayst prepare for thyself by thine own prudent conduct in life. I must ever refer thee to thyself. Thou must be the creator of thine own happiness; for this purpose God has endowed thee with reason and understanding.

Prudently avoid all dangerous and foolhardy undertakings; place thy household on a prudent footing; choose thy friends with prudence; avail thyself prudently and zealously of every opportunity of honestly extending and improving thy business; be prudent in thy relations with people of different views from thine own, and of different rank, and thou wilt save thyself many anxious hours, and build for thyself a peaceful paradise within the circle in which thou livest and workest, which will bestow far higher happiness than all the fleeting images of mere hope.

Look upon time as an unsown field, in which neither fortune nor misfortune will spring up of itself. Thou must first with thine own hands till the ground and sow the seed. And as thou sowest thou shalt reap. In this field pray, in this field labour, and God's blessing will attend thy exertions.

If, then, an unexpected piece of good luck, or an unhoped-for joy fall to thy lot, it will but surprise thee the more agreeably, and make thee the happier. Ah, how bountiful is God! how overflowing His goodness! In future years also He will send thee joys which thou hast neither looked for nor prayed for.

Be not over anxious! The fear of future evils is in itself the greatest of evils. Thou sufferest more from thy fears than thou art likely to suffer from misfortunes when they do come upon thee. Thou poisonest therewith thy health, and killest many a little joy, which may be blooming for thee in the present. Fear of the future is in many minds nothing but a bad habit. It is a gratification to them to be always complaining, and to conjure up anxieties in connexion with every subject. They inflict unnecessary tortures upon themselves, and, like madmen, destroy the real joys of the present.

Be not over anxious! It deprives thee of all courage, and thy very cowardice will often lead thee into trouble. Do not flatter thyself that thy anxieties and cares are the result of prudent forethought; for the prudent man is calm in mind, he enjoys with composure the pleasurable present, holds growing cares in check by hopes of better things in future; and when at last the threatened hour of misfortune comes, he meets it with resolute action, calculated to diminish or to conquer it. The sailor, borne on the billows of the ocean, rejoices with tranquil mind in the favourable wind and the cheerful sunshine. Would it be better

that he should be fearing storms, and looking forward to shipwreck, while everything is calm around him? But the sky becomes overcast, a raging wind lashes the ocean into fury, rends the sails of his ship and threatens him with terrible destruction. Fear and cowardice would only accelerate his ruin. But trusting in God, who is with him even in the midst of storms on the solitary waters, the sailor gathers up his waning strength, hastens to every point where his help is most needed, wrestles with wind and waves, and by his resoluteness and prudence saves himself from the danger.

Be not over anxious! But, if hitherto thou hast not been quite happy, reflect that things are ever changing. If thy present position be a disconsolate one, take courage, for surely it will not ever remain the same. Hast thou not yet learnt to know from thine own experience the ever-changing character of things? If darkness reign around thee at present, be comforted, in a few days all will be brighter; here below misfortune is as little lasting as happiness. Why should we despair because one sun sets? Will not a new morn dawn for us beyond the night? Take a full survey of thy present painful position, reflect on thy tribulations, and then say whether thou hast lost all! Nay! And even hadst thou lost all else thou hast not lost God? Why, therefore, despair?—(Hebrews xiii. 5, 6.)

Be not over anxious, for God will be with thee at all times. And should even every hope, every happi-

ness in life be lost to thee, thou wilt still not be quite impoverished, for the inexhaustible source of every joy, of every good gift, the loving-kindness of God, has not deserted the world. If the hand of death have robbed thee of a treasure, of one of the cherished ones of thy heart, why shouldst thou for ever weep over the grave of the beloved dead? Turn to eternity! Thou art being led by the hand of God towards the dear one whom thou hast lost here below. Is it human injustice that has inflicted injury on thee, or is it the cruelty of unfeeling souls, or is it the havock of war that has deprived thee of part, or perhaps the whole, of thy fortune? Take courage and look up, for retributive justice rules above the stars, and thy tears also have been counted.

Be not over anxious, but consider that the trials that fell upon thee in the past year, and which are now depressing thy spirit and depriving thee of all hope in better days—consider that they were but a test of thy Christian faith, a test but also a warning to thee how to conduct thyself in future troubles. Thou art created for another world, and not alone for this fleeting dream of earthly life. It is only through matured virtues, through tried wisdom, through greatness of soul, that thou canst become a worthy denizen of a better world. Evils exist that in enduring them and in struggling with them we may exercise and strengthen our souls. (2 Cor. 4, 17—18.) Thou hast suffered? Well, then, show me what thou hast learnt in the school of suffering? Hast thou become a better

man or woman? If so, then thou wilt look forward without fear to the future and to the losses it may bring. Thou wilt look up to Heaven and exclaim with joyful trust: "THE LORD GIVETH AND THE LORD TAKETH AWAY, GLORY BE TO HIS NAME!"

Fear no evil but such as thou hast brought upon thyself by thine own fault! There is nothing man has to dread so much as his own errors, his own imprudence, his own passions. Therefore fear not the future, but fear thyself. The future is sent by God, but by far the greater number of misfortunes and troubles are brought on by man himself. Live a Christian life, and whatever may befall thee, thou wilt lead a happy life!

Fear naught if thou hast no reason to fear thyself! Lift thyself out of thy present painful and depressing position with manly, Christian resolution. Take into account all circumstances, reflect upon the best means of extricating thyself; brace up thy courage to apply them with all thy might, and to the best of thy understanding. And when thy strength faileth, when thou canst do no more, God will do the rest!

Yea, Thou wilt help, divine Father, Thou who providest for the lowliest worm in the dust. Full of trust I will lean upon Thee, and whatever may befall me in this new year, nothing shall turn me away from Thee, or destroy my confidence in the Holy Word of Thy Son, Jesus Christ! What terrors can the future have for me when I know Thou art there? What loss can dishearten me as long as I do not lose Thee?

I will walk in Thy sight in the year that lies before

me, a better, wiser, more religious man than in the past, and with the new year I will begin a new life. Whatever trouble, whatever sacrifices it may cost me, I am determined to conquer my faults, and the vicious tendencies which are ruining me in secret.

And—should I not survive to the end of the year, should it prove my last—ah, may then not only the tears of friends shed at my grave, but also my own good conscience, bear testimony in my favour before Thee! I will prepare myself for this. Should this prove the year of my death, it will also prove the year of my birth into a better world. May I die smiling in full trust in Thee, my God ,and enter smiling into that eternity in which new bliss awaits me in the midst of Thy wonderful and infinite creations. Amen!

PROVIDENCE.

Mine is a living faith—God ne'er will leave me—
  Should even hope's last anchor break, and care
Make pale the glowing hopes that now deceive me,
  I'll not despair.

And tread I oft through wintry paths, and dreary,
  Where Life's dark night no friendly gleam may share;
His providence shall guide my footsteps weary:
  I'll not despair.

(Psalm xxxvii. 5.)

There may be hours or weeks of painful experiences, which lay low our strength, which extinguish all our hopes. There are times in which misfortunes gather around us from every side, and which seem to unsettle our deepest and holiest convictions, and even to shake the faith of our souls in Eternal Providence.

We behold with terror malice triumph, and right succumb; we see God-fearing Christians, who have fulfilled their duties *modestly*, and *have done much good* in secret, misjudged, scoffed at, slandered, and persecuted, while selfish, cunning, shameless rogues are favoured by fortune in all their undertakings, and we ask ourseves, doubtingly, "Is there no Providence watching from above the stars?"

Alas! how many peaceful, pious, happy families have been the victims of the ravages of war. Of what have they been guilty, that their dwelling-places, the homes of every virtue, should be laid in ashes? Of what has the father been guilty, that, bowed down with sorrow, he should be destined to see the competence, to attain which he had laboured so untiringly, destroyed in a few brief hours? The nights harassed by care, the days of wearying exertion, the sweat of his brow in which he toiled for the welfare of his dear ones, the sorrows and the hopes of a long life—have they all proved vain? The poor babe, which was the joy of its father's and mother's hearts—how has he offended, that the greed of robber hordes should precipitate him and his parents into abject poverty — that he should be doomed through life to struggle with want, and, perhaps, one day, when father and mother are gone, to wander, as a homeless beggar, from cottage to cottage, asking alms of strangers? We shudder at the sight of such unhappy victims, and ask, "Are the children of men left to be the sport of blind and cruel chance, or is our destiny ruled by a malevolent Providence?

A mother, who refuses to be comforted, is kneeling by the bedside of her dying child. The beloved babe, whom she bore with pain, and whom she reared with tender care, lies, like a withering blossom, before her, and the best joys of her life are fading with him. She raises her tearful eyes to Heaven, and then looks down

again at the patient, angelic little sufferer. She kisses his pale cheek: he opens his eyes for the last time, and once more smiles, with sweet innocence, upon his doating mother; once more he stretches out his baby hand to meet hers, as if for a last farewell. Alas, he is loth to part from the faithful maternal heart! But love is torn from love, heart from heart. The mother sinks down insensible by the corpse of her darling. All her sufferings, all her care, have then proved vain? All the hopes that she cherished, all the tears that she shed, have been cherished and shed in vain? In vain were the prayers which she sent up from her solitude for the recovery of her child? Her lot is, then, unspeakable sorrow here below, and on high no ear to hear her prayers? Sunk in deep dejection, she gazes out into the night of existence, as if she were seeking for help, for salvation, for God; and the sighs that escape her oppressed bosom seem to cry to Heaven, "If there be a Providence, why does He forsake me?"

When devastating floods sweep away the homesteads of numberless families; when earthquakes destroy entire cities, and bury the inhabitants under their ruins; when, as in a neighbouring country, mountain-tops fall down, and an entire valley, with its population of cheerful and happy shepherds, men, women, and children, dwellers on the spot and strangers within their doors, are interred beneath the huge mass of earth, so that every trace of what has been is lost— who can remain untouched by fear? Who can refrain

from directing an inquiring look toward the mysterious provisions of Eternal Foresight.

Yea, there are moments, hours, weeks, of anguish, which lay low our strength. There may be in our lives a simultaneous concurrence of unhappy circumstances which shake even the faith and trust with which the Christian leans upon Providence. There are times in which everything seems to conspire against our happiness; in which there is nothing we can reckon on with confidence; when unexpected events occur which seem to deprive us of every support. In such dark hours, we are apt to feel as though we were alone in the world—as though God did not exist for us—as though our weal and our woe were given over to blind chance. The faith in a guiding and wisely-ordaining Providence, which had until then sustained us, now appears to us as a mere illusion of the mind—as a self-invented anodyne for our sufferings.

But, if we reflect calmly, we soon find that Providence has not ceased to guide and to watch—that the Deity has not vanished from the world—and we recognise the causes which have in reality led to our want of trust—which have shaken our faith.

Who can deny that, in most cases, men do not think of Providence until misfortune overtakes them? As long as they live contentedly in the midst of ordinary circumstances, they rarely, if ever, reflect upon God's guidance of the fate of those whom He has called into existence. In like manner, it is only when

stretched on a bed of pain, that the sick reflect upon the happiness of health. As long as they were well, they disdained to think of illness, and gave themselves up to pleasure, until it was converted into poison. Not until overwhelmed with misfortunes, breaking in from all sides, do men raise their eyes to heaven, and ask, oppressed by suffering, "Does a good Providence watch over me also?" But when thus oppressed and distracted by anxiety, their minds are not in a state to acquire any firm conviction of their living under the constant guidance of a divine Providence. Their hearts are too much occupied with other matters to allow of their taking a calm and comprehensive view of the events of their lives. They think only of what they fear at the moment, they feel only their present ills; and because their anxious souls are incapable of receiving a sudden conviction of the reality of God's wise government of all things—because they cannot at once call to mind all the evidences of the exalted wisdom of the Divine decrees, which might, at other times, teach them the truth, they doubt and despond. They see only the mournful present, and discern not the consistency and plan of all existence. They detach the individual circumstances, which are weighing heavily upon themselves, from the chain of millions of other circumstances and events with which they are intimately linked together, and it is not surprising that weak souls, unaccustomed to contemplate the wondrous government of the world, should mistake a part for the whole, the subordinate for the prin-

cipal, and that they should believe themselves and the entire universe to be the sport of blind, lifeless chance.

If, in days of greater calm and repose, when we were capable of meditating on higher subjects, we had accustomed ourselves to trace the mysterious hand of the Eternal Ruler of the world in the circumstances of human life, our minds would have acquired a strength and a capacity in this direction, which even the greatest misfortunes could not destroy. Did we make it a rule in quiet hours to reflect upon the strange events of our own lives, be they pleasant or sorrowful, we should often find reason to exclaim with joyful surprise: "Yes, that was the hand of God!" We should see how events, which at the time they occurred we looked upon as irreparable misfortunes, have borne the most blessed fruits in regard to the entire course of our life, or in regard to the welfare of those that belong us. We should see that if this or another of our most ardent wishes had been fulfilled, we should not have attained our present position, or the happiness that we actually enjoy. We should be obliged to confess that many things for which we once laboured, prayed and wept in vain, would, had they come to pass, have destroyed our happiness and that of others. We should be forced to admit that many a terrible occurrence, which once produced a disastrous effect on our fortunes, has had the most beneficial effect on our hearts, and that we have to thank the change of mind thus brought about for many of the blessed hours of calm content which we now enjoy.

A Christian, accustomed thus to trace the guidance of human affairs by the all-wise hand of God, will never, whatever may be the misfortunes that befall him in life, lose his faith in the Heavenly Father and in His overruling Providence. A Christian thus trained sees no chance or accident in the universe, but everywhere harmony and order. He will from the depths of his misery call out to God, but remembering how often short-sighted man deceives himself in regard to his most ardent wishes, he will add to each prayer for relief: "But, O Lord, not as I will but as Thou wilt!" He will lean with a confidence that will strengthen his faltering heart, on the wise decrees of God, in the same manner as a child continues to trust his father, though the latter treat him with seeming severity.

Another source of men's want of faith in an Eternal Providence may be found in the thoughtless presumption with which we arrogate to ourselves the power of judging of the whole course of the universe, while reflecting on the fortunes of a single individual. Senseless mortal, thou presumest to question and to judge that which is to effect the entire tenor of thy life, and thou canst not even predict with certainty what will be the events of the next hour! Thou questionest the existence of an All-ruling Providence, because thou art incapable of seeing what good may come of some misfortune, which has brought ruin upon cities and provinces. Of all the universe thou knowest but a grain of sand; of all eternity but one minute! How then canst thou know whether that

which to thine eyes seems grievous misfortune be really so, or whether it were felt as a misfortune by those whom it befell?

Thou doubtest God's Providence because thy limited intellect is incapable of understanding and comprehending it! He who would sit in judgment on the divine government of the world must himself be God!

We often complain of what to us seems baneful, and the wholesome effects of which as regards ourselves or the world in general, we are incapable of foreseeing; and in like manner we find fault with events which man cannot bring about, and which man cannot prevent.

But many things which appear very terrible to our imaginations, are much less so to those whom they befall. When earthquakes swallow up flourishing cities with thousands of happy families—when a crumbling mountain buries beneath its masses of earth the population of a whole tract of land—what is it that constitutes the most terrific feature of such an event?—The death of these many individuals, their sudden disappearance from the realms of life. Their death? Is death, then, so terrible a misfortune? Is not that last minute, in which the great change takes place, the final goal of every human being? Do not hundreds and thousands of the myriads of men who are dispersed over the surface of the earth die every day of the year, while, on the other hand, hundreds and thousands are born each day? Would it be a great misfortune to die and be changed at the same moment as

all those we hold most dear? Would not many a husband willingly die with his dying wife? Would not many a mother willingly follow the darling child of her heart into the grave? What, then, is the terrible misfortune of which you speak, O sceptics? That thousands vanish in one and the same moment from the earth?—But thousands are carried away daily by disease and other causes. That thousands were annihilated while indulging in one and the same dream. But what connection is there between a dream and a so-called misfortune? What God does is well done! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. xi. 33, 34.)

Upon the whole, the principal cause of our want of faith in a Divine Providence, is that we cling too much to that which is merely sensuous and earthly, to those things that concern the wants of the body only, and that we do not make ourselves sufficiently familiar with the thought of the spiritual world, to which our souls belong. —To him, who, in thought, occupies himself as much with the world of spirit as with his material concerns, death is not a terrible evil. He knows that he lives in God, from whom, in whom, and through whom, all things have their being; and in God there is no death. The loss of wealth cannot either be a terrible evil to a Christian; that is, to a truly wise man. Nay, it is only to those who have lived exclusively in and for their

earthly possessions that the loss of these can be the greatest of evils; and how could a Christian, a true sage, live principally for that which he knows is only lent to him, which he cannot retain, which is ever changing? And how should he tremble for that which he knows passes from one death-bed to another, from one heir to another? To him who has not placed his greatest good in that which belongs to the dust, the loss of that which is, and ever will remain, dust, cannot be the greatest of evils. Indeed, as regards many a man, it is *necessary* that he should first grow poor to enable him to raise his thoughts to his higher happiness—to the happiness of belonging to God, and of being destined for a more exalted existence.

Frequently, however, it is only a momentary state of dejection that causes us to swerve in our faith and trust in an Eternal and All-ruling Providence. Thinking only of his own littleness, and forgetting the nameless perfection of God, man sometimes says to himself, "God is too exalted, of what importance to Him can be my humble concerns or wishes, or the weal or woe of every insignificant being in the world!"

Of what importance? Art thou not the creature of God? And is not God the Most-high, the All-perfect, who has organized, and who sustains the boundless universe? Whither art thou led by thy despondency? Thou degradest the wisdom and the power of the Deity to a level with the limited understanding, and the limited power of a mortal, who is unable to embrace all things. Thou comparest Him to thyself, poor

worm, and measurest the Creator by the standard of the created.

Canst thou believe that He who guideth and ordereth the course of the stars, those myriads of worlds, through the infinite realms of space—that He who binds even the smallest grain of sand on the globe with invisible bonds, so that it shall not be lost out of the world;—that He who watches over the minute insects, which, in the form of mildew, rejoice in life on the leaf of a rosebush, which is to them their world;—that He who ruleth the great realm of dead forces with infinite wisdom;—that He would leave uncared for, or forget the spirits, who, far nobler than any dead forces, are able to praise Him, to call Him by name, and to worship Him?—Forget! What an unworthy idea hast thou formed of the All-perfect One! If he be God, He must be infinitely perfect; and if He be this, then His omniscience, His mercy, His wisdom, and His all-embracing love must be as infinitely perfect. Without His will, as Jesus tells us, no sparrow falls to the ground; and He numbers the hairs of our heads. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. vi. 30.)

O Eternal, Unsearchable, All-merciful Being, whom I call Father, who sustaineth all things, who ordereth all things, who guideth all things; Thou rulest my destiny also! Thou hast never, Thou wilt never abandon me, though all else fail me here below.

Calmly and confidently, I walk in the mysterious path along which Thy invisible hand guideth me ; for I know it leads to Thee. I honour and worship the wondrous ways of Thy Providence, and of the eternal laws that govern the world of spirits which Thou hast created!—I honour and worship, even when the light of my understanding sufficeth not to compass them ! For all things come from Thee, O infinite and merciful Father ! All things come from Thee! All paths lead to Thee!

THE RELIGION OF CHILDHOOD.

The child in spotless innocence
  Upon its mother's breast,
Sorrow and sin as yet unknown,
  Sinks tranquilly to rest.

Ah, guard this innocence divine!
  Keep it unstained and pure—
A holy temple, at whose shrine
  The child may dwell secure.

For all earth's false and specious show,
  Wealth, fame, all worldly bliss,
Can ne'er such happiness bestow,
  Or yield such peace as this.

Religion! it is thou alone
  Can keep him safe from ill:
Oh, let thy shield be o'er him thrown,
  Thy love surround him still.

Then, tho' temptation may assail,
  Or scorn his darts may fling;
Strong in thy strength, he shall prevail,
  Nor feel repentance' sting.

Thy wondrous care the innocent
  Through every fate can guide,
Pure as from God, he first was sent,
  Home to Jehovah's side.

(LUKE ii. 40—47.)

HAPPY, guileless childhood, image of the innocence of paradise, of man's life in the garden of Eden! May

religion be the angel which early opens every child's heart to God, which early arms it against the might of the passions, and which leads its innocence unscathed through the storms of life, through the days of temptation, through the various changes of fate.

In vain would ye keep back the name of the heavenly Father: every child has a mysterious *feeling of* His presence, and will from time to time surprise you with questionings about the Creator of heaven and earth; about Him who sends forth the sun and the stars each in its time; whose lightnings shoot through the skies, and whose thunders cause the earth to tremble.—Why would ye withhold from him the name of God and of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as you must either satisfy the child's curiosity, or give it a falsehood for a truth?

It is in vain that with mistaken prudence ye refuse to teach him the name of God; he will hear it from the lips of his play-fellows, and then, perhaps, connect it with unworthy conceptions. Father, mother, try to be the first from whose lips your child hears the name of the Heavenly Father, and from whom he learns to know that He is ever present; ye will then have it in your power to instil into the young mind such ideas of the highest Being as ye approve; you may then help it to form such conceptions as are best suited to its undeveloped power of comprehension and its limited experience. A child has faith in its parents, and in this faith it will believe even what it is not capable of comprehending.

Say to it: "We are indeed thy father and thy mother, but God is our Father and the Father of all men living. He is invisible to us, yet He is nevertheless everywhere present. Without Him nothing would be in existence; without His love for us no blade of grass, no ear of corn, no fruit would grow, no flower would bloom, no animal would breathe. Unless He wills it nothing can befall us, either good or evil. Thy mother is indeed a kind and loving friend, but God is kinder than she, and loves thee even better. Thy father knows a great deal, and can do a great many things, but God's knowledge is far greater than that of thy father, and He can do more than ever man could do."

Speak thus to your child, and he will listen with curiosity and astonishment and reverence to what you say of God. He will never lose the remembrance of this Heavenly Father of all; he will divide his love between you and the holy, almighty, and loving, though invisible, Being, who provides for all creatures and is the friend of the highest as well as of the lowest.

In that hour in which for the first time you speak to your child of God, you lay the germ of religion in his heart. This germ will not fail to take root, and you will one day see it bloom into sweet piety.

Bestow upon your child religion, and you will find the task of educating him greatly facilitated. Religion will help to ennoble his heart when your influence has reached the limit beyond which it cannot pass, and

under circumstances that your watchful eye cannot penetrate. You can forbid the child to act wrongly; but the remembrance of the existence of an omniscient God can alone withhold him from thinking evil. You can punish the disobedience which you see; but the disobedience which you do not see can only be reproved by the religious sentiment.

But the thought of God must not be all that the child's religion comprehends; the *spirit* of the Christian religion, the holy spirit, must also penetrate the hearts of the little ones. And the spirit of true Christianity is love, as God Himself is love.—It is your duty to open the heart of your child, so that this holy Christian sentiment can enter it. Religious conversations or religious teachings will not alone suffice for this. Your lessons may sink into the memory of the child, but his heart may remain untouched. Your example, your conduct in life, will effect more than all your teachings. Show the child that *you love* it even when you are inflicting punishment for a fault, and he will love you in return. Tell him no falsehoods, and he will blush at untruth and meet you with open candour. Treat all persons with respect, or at least courtesy, and your child will not be repulsive and harsh to others. Hold sacred the property of others, and he will touch nothing that does not belong to him.

Inexperienced youth follows blindly in the footsteps of its educators. Forget not, O parents, that you have mostly yourselves led the way in the path in

which your child has lost himself; and that the loveable qualities that adorn him are often but a reflex of your virtues. Therefore, if you would have him honour God and religion, show him in your words and deeds what religion, what fear of God is! Never take in vain the holy name; never show indifference to public worship; never evince inattention and want of reverence when at prayer.

Let your child see you pray. Take care that your prayers, that is, your communions with God, be it in the morning or the evening, or at your midday meal, be offered up in his presence with deep-felt devotion. The child cannot as yet pray with you, but demand from him at least the outward signs of reverence towards the Most High. Do not fear to make him thereby a hypocrite. Uncorrupted children cannot be hypocritical; they will soon seek a reason for these outward signs of reverence, which make more impression on them than words. Then explain to them what prayer is. Speak to them as follows: "We grown up people, as well as you little ones, are the children of the good God. All that we possess we owe to His great love for us. Therefore we thank Him for all the good he bestows upon us. Therefore we implore Him to remain in future also our loving Father, who will provide for us. And when we speak to the invisible God, it is but right that we should do so with the reverential bearing that beseems children when addressing their heavenly and almighty Father."

Not until the child has acquired some settled idea

of the Deity, His power, and His love—not until he is capable of turning spontaneously to God with a prayerful heart—should you teach him to pray. But this teaching to pray, be it undertaken by father or by mother, let it not be a mere teaching to utter words without thought, but a guidance to true communion with God. Therefore take care that your children do not learn forms of prayer by rote. What children repeat from memory seldom makes any impression on their hearts. It becomes a matter of mere habit, an indifferent daily custom, pharasaical repetitions such as Jesus Christ so warmly reproved. Guard the integrity of your children's minds and their reverence for God. Forms of prayer learnt as a lesson, and which are above the comprehension of the child, and repeated by him quite mechanically—which are indeed sometimes even drawn up in a foreign language—cannot inspire him with reverence for God, or for religion, but, on the contrary, lead him to contempt for God, and to desecration of religion.

Christian mother, take thy child once a-week, say, into thy room alone with thee. Tell him first how many benefits thou and he have already received from the All-good One, and how many more you still expect from Him. Tell him this in simple words, which, coming from the heart, go to the heart. And when thou hast thus prepared the receptive mind of the child, then, O mother, Christian mother, go down upon thy knees, let thy child kneel beside thee, and pour forth from thy heart a few such words to God as thou

knowest would be likely to arise in thy child's mind, such as his heart would speak to God. Thy child will repeat the words and will understand the supplication; he will surely follow thee in thought also and will pray and send up his thanksgiving with childish fervour. This is to teach a child to commune with God. Mother, in such moments the Omnipresent hovers above thee and thy praying child, and His blessing will descend upon you! And thy son or thy daughter will one day pray in secret, as thou hast taught them to pray. They will pray for thee with solemn devotion when illness has prostrated thee, and thou canst no longer lift thine own voice in prayer, and with this same holy devotion they will kneel beside thy grave, praying in heart and truth, not repeating mere empty words.

The child's worship of God in prayer ought to be voluntary, not compulsory. Compulsion destroys the joyfulness with which we ought always to approach God. Compulsion desecrates the most sacred act, and deprives devotion of its blessed influence on the soul. It is you, O Christian parents, who in the first case have to make your children's hearts receptive for devotion, so that the desire to commune with the heavenly Father may arise spontaneously in them. By compulsion you may enforce the utterance of empty words, but not the sentiments of love, reverence and devotion.

For this reason there is some risk in allowing children in whose hearts the religious sentiment has not

been sufficiently awakened, to take part in public worship. Their restlessness is apt to disturb the devotion of their elders, and renders it irksome to themselves to remain quietly in the church. The restraint they suffer necessarily inspires them with a dislike of the house of God, which is however generally not evinced until they have reached an age when they are at liberty to attend public worship or not, as suits them best. And, ye parents and educators, you cannot but know that the first impressions made on the heart of youth are generally the most lasting, and extend even to old age. Let us therefore be very careful that nothing that is in any way connected with religion, make a disagreeable impression on the hearts of children.

It is but too true that the exaggerated, though well meant zeal, of many parents who oblige their children at a very early age to attend public worship, has had the most melancholy results, and is in a great measure the cause of so many persons abstaining altogether from taking part in the public worship of any Christian congregation.

Indeed, how can you expect a child to take an interest in listening to the Divine Word, when his understanding is not sufficiently matured to enable him to comprehend it? How can we expect him to be devout in a place where his natural vivacity finds so many objects to divert his attention?

Nay, let your children's minds and hearts be sufficiently developed to understand the meaning of public worship before you allow them the privilege of appear-

ing in the house of God. Do not force them to an attendance at church, which they ought to desire ardently, and which they will in time come to desire. First make them acquainted with the exalted object of these Christian assemblies, and they will not fail to wish to take part in them. But make them at the same time acquainted with the lukewarmness and levity and indifference of many Christians: so that they may be prepared for and understand the unseemly conduct of many whom they may see at church, and that they may be able to explain to themselves how it is that Christians may be seen praying in temples, who outside of the temple are heard to curse and to swear, and to bear false witness against their neighbour, and are known to commit perjury and to give themselves up to all kinds of vices.

Not until Jesus was twelve years old, and had grown in mind and wisdom (Luke ii. 40-42), was He seen in the temple. He sat among the teachers full of a holy desire for knowledge, and listened to them and questioned them. In like manner, the day on which you take your children for the first time into the assembly of their fellow-Christians, will, and ought to be, one of the most solemn days of their life. The remembrance of it will, in after years, always call forth pleasing emotions.

But long before they pass the threshold of a temple to take part in public worship, they ought to have become true worshippers of God. It is not the temple, or the altar that consecrates the heart; it is the heart

that consecrates the temple. It is not the church that leads us to religion, but religion that leads us to the church.

Fill the hearts of your children with religious sentiments, and they will one day mix in the public worship of the Christian congregations with deeply moved souls. Previous to this, let the whole world be a temple of God to them, and teach them to attach a religious significance to all the more important events of their lives.

Open to them, O Christian parents, beside the graves of their companions, and of friends dear to them, the first view into eternity; show them the mouldering dust that is being let down into the tomb, and speak to them of the existence of the immortal soul which belongs not to the dust, but which, spiritual in its nature, is born independent and for infinitude. However imperfect be the conceptions of childhood of the continued life of the soul in a more exalted state beyond the grave, they will suffice to make the hope of immortality take root in the young hearts, and to make the belief in retribution after death grow with their growth. And as they increase in age and understanding, you will find many opportunities of correcting and ennobling their imperfect conceptions.

Let no family festivity take place in your homes, O Christian parents, without in some way connecting it with religion, and thus consecrating it; and do this more especially when celebrating the holy Christmas festival. If you do nothing more than inaugurate the day with a simple, heartfelt prayer, pronounced while

surrounded by your children,—verily such a prayer is a true consecration of the most blessed day.

In this manner the child begins its higher spiritual life, begins to live for God, and for eternity. In this manner religion becomes to the young heart an indestructible sanctum, in which it will find peace and repose in the days of manhood and of old age. This religious instruction, adapted to the powers of childhood, ought only to be gradually expanded as the child increases in age and knowledge. At length the time will come when he must be told of Jesus, of His deeds of love, and of His suffering for the human race; but this must not be until the child is quite capable of forming a worthy conception of the greatness of those deeds, and of those sufferings. Lead him not to the foot of the cross on which died the Divine Friend of man, until he is capable of shedding tears of deep emotion, of love, reverence, and gratitude, before he can appreciate the bliss comprised in the thought of being a disciple of Jesus.

Yet beware not to make the religion of childhood a thing of mere emotion, a mere play of the feelings. Do not merely excite the imaginations of the young, and rest contented with making them shed tears at the touching narratives you recount. No doubt such ebullitions of feeling in tender souls are not without their value; but they are evanescent. Their very nature prevents them from being lasting. Point this out to the growing youth and maiden. Make them understand that pious emotions are only the blossoms

of religion, and that fruits of their faith will be demanded of them in the form of pious deeds! Tell them that not the hearers of the Divine word, but only the doers of the Divine will, are true Christians; that we are not to glorify God in words, but by virtuous actions; that whosoever does not in action give proofs of love, of humility, of obedience, of a conciliatory disposition, and of devotion to the public welfare: whosoever is incapable of sacrificing himself for the happiness of his brothers, as Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself, does not live with Jesus, does not live in God.

O ye fathers and mothers! let us consecrate to God the darlings of our hearts, whom He has entrusted to us! Impart to them during the earlier years of their lives the holy teachings of religion, so that their souls, penetrated by them, may acquire strength to encounter courageously and cheerfully whatever fate may be in store for them. You may then one day approach the throne of the eternal Judge with joyful hearts, and say: "Lord, here are they whom Thou didst entrust to me!" Then, when death comes and separates you from them for a short while, you may depart with the sweet hope of being soon re-united with them. For they will have walked in the path of salvation with you. They will have held in life the same faith, and cherished the same love as you. Their hope in death will be the same as yours! And your destiny will remain indissolubly bound to theirs, as your souls were indissolubly united in life.

Yea, those that Thou hast united, O Father in Heaven,

the grave has no power to separate; and those who have bound themselves to Thee, through Jesus, cannot be dissevered from Thee. Oh, sweet balm of Revelation, holy truth of Faith, penetrate the tender hearts of our children, and strengthen them and make them happy! and Thou, O Holy Spirit of God, guide our children through the labyrinth of life towards the great and eternal goal of all spirits, towards the goal which Jesus disclosed to us, and to enable us to reach which He shed His precious blood. Amen.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES IN YOUTH.

With earnest gaze, the soul of youth
  Looks up, O God! to Thee.
Clear Thou his mind to know the truth,
  Open his eyes to see.

Towards his chosen goal he speeds,
  Through life, with courage high;
Oh, ne'er to him be noble deeds,
  Or virtue, mockery.

Who God within his breast retains
  Till life's last course be run,
Sorrow or joy alike sustains,
  For him the fight is won.

(Prov. ii. 1.)

To thee, tender, emotional heart of youth, I dedicate these pages of love, of sanctification, and of secret devotion. Nay, a loving Providence dedicates them to thee, by allowing them to fall into thy hands.—Wilt thou lay them by without heeding them? Surely, thou canst not be so indifferent to thine own welfare.

Thou hast attained the age when every day will make thee more independent of those who have hitherto

had the care of thy education, and will make thee more dependent on thyself. Thy parents may die; thy older relatives may die, and at length all that belonged to thy childhood will vanish. Soon thou mayst stand alone in the world. Soon thou mayst know what it is to be thus isolated in life, to have no one to lean upon but one's-self! Ever since thou didst draw thy first breath, and up to this moment, thou hast been watched over by loving and devoted hearts. Now thou must fall off from the parent stem, like a ripe fruit. Thou must learn to take care of thyself, and thus learn to take care of others too.

Long has this moment been anticipated with dread, by those who love thee most. Be assured the heart of father and of mother have often throbbed with anxiety at the thought of it. Perhaps as yet thou canst not see wherefore, but one day thou wilt understand it. As for thyself, thou hast probably been longing for the day that would free thee from control, and allow thee to live independently. Thy childhood has probably seemed to thee to be too long protracted. Well, thou hast now escaped from it. But I tell thee, that a day will come, when thou wilt look back to it as to a lost paradise, and wish that it could return. I tell thee thou wilt soon cease to be joyous and guileless as thou hast hitherto been. Perhaps thou art already no longer so. For many a year thou wert guarded by the prudence and strength of others from unforeseen evils and troubles. Hereafter thou must guard thyself. And yet, alas, it is to thyself that thou wilt,

though unconsciously, owe the greater number of troubles that will befall thee.

Dear soul, even on the threshold of life truth bids me meet thee with the sad prediction, that much suffering, much unhappiness awaits thee. Nay, smile not incredulously, for ere long perhaps thou wilt peruse these pages with tearful eyes.

But how art thou to guard thyself, thou whose strength is still unpractised? How art thou to guard thyself, thou, whose experience, whose knowledge, is still so limited? How art thou to guard thyself whilst standing so alone in life, with no one on whom thou canst depend, whilst perhaps betrayed and abandoned by those in whom thou didst most confide?

What is to be thy shield? How art thou to grow strong in the midst of the storms of life, and wise in the midst of the confusion of unknown circumstances? —I will tell thee. Not by thine own power, but through the aid of a higher Power, who watches over thee—through the power of GOD. Many that are stronger than thou have fallen, because, relying on their own strength, they leant not upon God. Thou also wilt fall, unless thou holdest fast by Him.

It is thy duty to guard thyself, and thou canst do it. But not by thine own wisdom, but by following the guidance of One far wiser than thou, who died that thou mightst be saved. Thou canst do so, taught by the wisdom of the Divine Man, whom, during two thousand years, the wisest of mortals have called their Saviour—by the wisdom of Jesus. Many that were

cleverer than thou art, have fallen, because, relying on their own cunning, ability and arts, they abandoned Jesus, or because they had never known Him. Verily, I say unto thee, unless thou followest Him, thou also wilt fall.

Dost thou know Jesus Christ? Ever since thy childhood thou hast seen thousands and thousands praying in His name in the temples of God. The learned and the ignorant, rulers and people, old men and young children, the rich and the poor. All pronounce the name of Jesus with deep reverence. Dost thou know Him? Dost thou confide in Him? Dost thou venerate Him? Or hast thou remained indifferent to Him? Dost thou think the whole world mistaken and thyself alone in the right?

Thou art baptized in His name, and hast thus been adopted into the community of the millions and millions who are strengthened, exalted, and made holy and happy by His Spirit, by His living words. Therefore art thou called a Christian. But dost thou know Christ?

Thou hast taken the communion? What emotions held possession of thy heart in the solemn hour, before thou didst approach the altar? Was not thy heart penetrated by holy feelings when publicly, as well as inwardly, standing before the altar thou becamest for a moment, as it were, one in body and spirit with Christ? But dost thou know Him?

It is He who binds thy immortal spirit to the loving God, to the Father of the infinite universe, who is also

thy Father. It is He who links the days which thou livest upon earth, to the days of another life into which thou wilt enter in the hour of death. He that doeth this is Jesus, the divine Son! And this linking of our souls to God and eternity, which we have learnt from Him, is RELIGION; and when in solemn earnestness thou dost knit this bond, thou art truly religious.

While thou art still fresh and young, and engaged in the pleasures and occupations of youth, it seems, perhaps, too much to demand of thee that thou shouldst earnestly devote thyself to religion. But, verily, it only seems so. Can it ever be too early to acquire lasting peace of mind, lasting cheerfulness of soul, lasting inward happiness? Certainly not. Religion, therefore, can never come too early to you. A pious old man may be venerable, a mother in prayer may be a touching spectacle, but a religious youth, a religious young maiden, are not less venerable, and are by their very piety made the more attractive in the eyes of the world.

Why should the seriousness of religion be unsuited to thy years? It is true the thought of God and eternity is a serious thought, because it is the most exalted one that mortal man can think and utter. But it is the very solemnity of the thought that fills the heart with the purest joy; that will guard thee from many faults, and therefore keep thy conscience clear; that will inspire trust in a loving Providence, and render thee fearless of whatsoever may befall thee. The most religious man is also the happiest. The irreligious

man oscillates between extreme gaiety and extreme melancholy: he is seldom of equable temper, and is more unhappy in mind than the reverse, even when he seems joyous and content. Religion, far from making us moody and dark, gives a new zest to our joy, while in the hour of suffering it lends to the mind that serene magnanimity, the experience of which is sweeter than any worldly pleasure.

Think not that thy friends have no religion, because they seldom speak of religious matters. There are hours of solitude, in which they fold their hands—in which their hearts tremble, and their eyes are raised to heaven, and their spirit communes with God. But to every feeling mind religion is what it holds highest and most sacred, and therefore they shrink from exposing it to the vulgar gaze of the many. Each one shuts up the jewel in his own heart. Each one knows how he stands before God. Why should he make it a subject of common conversation with others? Of what avail would this be to himself or to others? He would perhaps only run the risk of being misunderstood and misjudged.

Think not that even those persons are without religion, who, from vanity or thoughtlessness, and in order to be looked upon as unusually clever and witty, forget themselves so far as to scoff at religious observances, religious acts, and religious doctrines. We ought never to scoff at that which is sacred in the eyes of others, and which leads them to good. But even scoffers are religious in the depths of their hearts, and

in spite of their thoughtlessness. The misfortunes that befall them, the forewarnings of death, the threatenings of the future, urge them to pray, and they, who often laughed at prayer, pray. They who would fain persuade themselves that they doubt the immortality of the spirit, nevertheless look trustingly forward to eternity, because the laws of their nature bid them do so. Religion has not been *invented* or *made*. It is the very breath, the thought, and the life of the spirit. Therefore, it is not we alone—our times alone—that have a religion; all times have had one. And it is not only the civilized nations of our times that have a religion; but the wild Indians beyond the seas have one, and had one before they became known to the rest of the world. It is true, their religious ideas are confused, puerile, very faulty, because the mental capacities of these people have been misguided, or have not been developed or exercised. In like manner our religious notions, in early childhood, were very puerile; and now that we have attained to a higher stage of mental development, and possess more knowledge, they seem to us almost ridiculous. But, though the barbarous savage may worship the creature instead of the Creator—though he may make offerings to the deity of slaughtered animals, instead of offering up a pure heart—the relation he establishes is, nevertheless, religion, and what he feels is religiosity; it is a linking of his spirit with the Invisible, the Eternal, the Unknown. And this is the great merit of Christ, that He came into the world to guide humanity from darkness into

light, from the perishable to the imperishable, from error to truth; to release us from the bondage of sin, and to raise us up into the sanctuary of God.

In fact, none are entirely without religion, except madmen and confirmed sceptics; and the latter, as well as the former, may be considered sick in mind. The tendency to scepticism, with its accompanying wretchedness, is generally experienced in the years that intervene between the attainment of majority and riper manhood. It will frequently be found that persons who, as children, believe, pray, and love, with true child-like simplicity, but who, when at a mature age they enter the world, and begin to inquire and to think for themselves, become the prey of religious doubts, at a more advanced period of life again recover their faith, their convictions, and their lost peace of mind.

It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that the religious scepticism which so frequently embitters those years in which the mental powers begin to develope themselves, is a consequence of the great mental insight then attained by the youth or maiden. On the contrary, they have only just emerged from childhood; their experiences, in regard to the world, to nature, and to the destinies of men, are still very limited, and their judgment, consequently, still very unripe. Their scepticism, therefore, arises rather from want of insight, and from a false use of their mental powers.

At the age when the understanding is only beginning to put forth its strength, the imagination very

frequently usurps its place. Many things which, in childhood, have been accepted and believed in, now prove, by closer investigation, to be untenable or unworthy of credence, or even contrary to common sense; they are, therefore, discarded, and the mind is alarmed. Distrust of other doctrines of the Church is engendered; these also are submitted to investigation, and thus doubts arise. Books are read without any previous inquiry into the worth of the writer; dissentient judgments are accepted as irrefutable; witty remarks are taken for arguments; and mere appearances are considered undeniable truth. Thus the confusion of mind becomes ever greater; the tendency to doubt everything formerly believed in increases in strength; and, finally, everything is rejected, nothing is believed. The consequence of this is real inward irreligiosity—the most painful state of mind to which a human being can be a prey, because it is unnatural, that is to say, is in direct opposition to the feelings and the nature of the spirit. The connexion between the latter and the living God—the Eternal Existence—is destroyed. You feel yourself alone in the great universe. All religious persons are in your eyes deceivers or dupes. The world and life become dark enigmas. At last, the sceptic even learns to doubt himself. Existence has no more joys for him, and suffering knows no consolation. He longs to return to the blind faith of his childhood, yet feels that it is impossible to do so. He pines for light and rest, and abhors his doubts, yet has neither strength nor courage to believe.

This unhappy state of conflict goes on; the sceptic can come to no conclusion, because he is ever deceiving himself anew, and attempting impossibilities by endeavouring to apply the measure of the feelings and the imagination to that which can only be fathomed by pure reason. The eternal cannot be grasped by the imagination, and therefore he rejects it, while he expects to obtain certainty as to the spiritual and the invisible, in the same manner as he obtains it as to corporeal and visible things. He now proceeds from one contradiction to another; he acknowledges that he can form no conception of his own spirit, yet he does not deny its existence and its mysterious action. But the existence of the Godhead and His mysterious action, the sceptic doubts, because he cannot understand it in the same way as he understands other things. Yet every day and every hour God speaks to us through His great and loving activity in us and out of us, in like manner as our spirit announces itself through thoughts and words. The nature of things is the thought and the word of God to the human spirit.

The constant mistake of the sceptic is, that he demands to see that which is invisible, and to have that which is not earthly and not human, *demonstrated* in an earthly and human way. If the existence of our own spirits can be proved, proof is at the same time afforded of the existence of God. For that a Deity rules the world is revealed to us, *by Him*, in the laws of our thought, which are so constituted that they

necessarily and invariably bring us back to this. This is the self-revelation of the Deity in the nature of man. Therefore have all nations of the earth from the beginning of time, and without having any intercourse with each other, believed in the existence of divine beings.

No philosopher has ever expressed the all-ruling power of the living God in such simple and sublime words as those recorded in the Holy Scriptures which David spake thousands of years ago, and which are as comprehensible to the child as to the most learned man: "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?"

The first step towards recovery from the mental disease of scepticism is to come to a firm determination to avoid, even if it be for months or years, all those speculations on religious and metaphysical subjects that lead to doubt. Not until this has been done can the mind recover its former elasticity and freedom, and that simplicity which will make it again receptive for truth. Then the spirit will find God again—sometimes even without seeking Him—will find the comfort of eternal life again, and the most blessed trust and the deepest peace. And it will understand what before was enigmatical; and will be astonished at having until then failed to recognize the simple sublimity, lucidity, and truth of the doctrines of Jesus. And the Gospels will inspire into the heart a quickening and divine strength.

Religiosity is the all-penetrating light of the spiritual world; where it is not, there is darkness, confusion, destruction. In like manner as noble religious sentiments give new youth to the spirit of the aged, so they render strong and manly the spirit of the young, and endow it with the wisdom of age. The youth or the maiden who is bound to God and to Eternity, will ever strive to think, to speak, and to act in a manner worthy of God and of Eternity. They have the consciousness of being even in secret at peace with God, the Judge who seeth in secret; and in regard to the world their acts are such as they can answer for to Him, to Whom even the most powerful of the earth are responsible.

The older we grow, the clearer our religious notions become; the more thoroughly we understand the meaning of Jesus' words; the more distinctly we see God in the wonders of the earth and the heavens; the more gloriously does His government appear to us in the various events of our life.

Therefore we ought always to keep alive the religious sentiments and principles within us, without however parading them before the world. They ought to be expressed in reverence for all that is holy; in tenderness towards the weaknesses of others; in kind judgment of our fellow-beings; in hearty readiness, to be of use to those who are known to us and also to those who are unknown to us; in respect shown to our superiors; in kindness to our inferiors; in unswerving firmness in the performance of duty; in moderation

in pleasure and patience under provocation; in imitation of all that is good, and in abhorrence of all shameful and forbidden acts and even thoughts.

However, man is weak. Noble sentiments evaporate, good principles are often forgotten. Common life with its occupations, its pleasures, and its many annoyances, overwhelms and conquers us, and drags us down into the slough of meanness and depravity. But we must make a strong effort to raise ourselves up. If we do not this we shall sink ever lower into mere animal life.

Therefore if thou wouldst retain the religious character of thy mind in full vigour, thou must nourish it in thine hours of solitude. Nourish it by reading good religious works; by reading the Scriptures—more particularly the life of Jesus, or the psalms of David, and the songs of Asaph; and by attendance on public worship.

Even these pages are devoted to keeping alive thy inward piety. Recognize in the words here addressed to thee, the voice of father and mother, and of all good men who love thee, and who would fain see thee grow in goodness and in happiness. Recognize therein the voices of generations that have descended before thee into the grave, but who address themselves to thy heart; the voices of the blessed who call to thee that thou mayest one day be blessed as they.

Efficacious above all things, however, above reading and hearing—is immediate communion with God in prayer. Let no day pass without devoting some portion of it, be it an hour or even only a minute, to com-

munion with thy Heavenly and Eternal Father. In the morning when thou awakest from refreshing sleep, and in the evening when thou closest thine eyes to go to rest, first lift up thy spirit to the Eternal Spirit, and pray and offer up thanks, and promises to mend thy ways before Him. Pray, as Jesus prayed, lovingly, trustingly, with entire resignation: "Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" Pray, as Solomon once prayed, not for earthly goods, not for aught perishable, but for wisdom and strength to overcome thy faults and thy passions, for power and opportunities to do much good, and ever to grow more perfect as thy Father in Heaven is perfect.

Christian piety is the highest wisdom, and makes those who possess it loveable in the sight of man and God. For that wisdom enters not a malignant mind, and dwells not in a body given over to sin. But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God; they are not cast down by suffering. Righteousness is immortal. Only through this, and through being deemed righteous by Thee, O Holy, Eternal God, am I immortal, eternal, and blessed! Is it possible that I should ever forget this? That I should ever forget Thee? That I should ever forget the sacred vows that I have made to Thee, or all that Thou hast done for me, for my parents, and for all those that I love? Is it possible that I should ever forget Jesus, the divine friend of my soul, He who by His light has led me to Thee? He who, full of pity, died for me?

Nay! To abandon God, is to abandon myself, to

give up my salvation. Nay! Let me ever remain Thy child, O my God and Father! Let me cling to Thee, midst all the distractions of life! To Thee I will look up in the hours of joy which Thou mayest send me; and by Thee I will hold fast in the hour of trial when the last earthly hope forsakes me. For Thou wilt not forget me, nor overlook me; I know this, Jesus has taught me this, and life also has taught it to me. In the hour of dissolution, when my dying lips stammer forth Thy name for the last time here below, I shall know and feel that Thou wilt not forget me, nor overlook me!

It is therefore far more possible that my soul should be dissevered from my body, than that I should be dissevered from Thee, Father in Heaven. I will seek for Thee in the works that Thou hast created, in the marvels wherewith Thou hast filled the universe. I will approach ever nearer to Thee through the knowledge I have acquired through Jesus Christ, my Saviour. I will draw nearer to Thee by growing in virtue, and by shunning everything sinful. Omnipresent, Omniscient, Invisible God, who searchest my heart, as I would that Thou shouldst search it. Ah! Thou knowest my weakness and my thoughtlessness; Thou knowest how often I fail. O Holy, Eternal Mercy! strengthen me, hold me up, that I may not fall; that neither the seductions of my senses, nor the misleading example of others, nor vanity, nor ambition, nor lust, nor flattery, nor hatred, may draw me away from Thee!

God of my childhood, Thou wilt be the God of my old age also, and bound to Thee through Jesus Christ, I thus possess far more than all this world has to offer me. If I have Thee, I have inward peace, and, however dark my life may be, I have the joyful prospect of a future existence full of bliss. Amen.

MEN'S ESTIMATE OF LIFE.

Man hasteth on from dream to dream,
'Midst hate, and now 'midst love;
As if upon life's narrow stream,
His bark some spirit drove.
He looketh round, and seeketh happiness to clasp,
And vanity and dust, is all that meets his grasp.

Be the world thine—
Let fortune's sunlight gild thy mortal lot—
Be lord of all earth counteth most divine—
Yet happiness, thou hast her not.
Only to holy souls can perfect bliss be known;
No fruit is she of worldly fame or gold;
In the bright spirit-world alone,
Her buds unfold.

Not here will she be given,
'Midst tumult and deceit:
Thy prize thou'lt win in heaven,
At Jesus' feet.

(Philipp. ii. 13, 14.)

Fleeting days! fleeting years! We await with impatience the coming of flower-crowned spring, and in a short while we sigh, because it has already gone by! What we call months, years, ages, before they come, we call minutes when they are gone. Childhood longs for adolescence, youth for riper manhood. Both arrive

but too soon, and after these old age, also too soon. White-headed men look back with sad longing to the past, as to a dream. It was the same thousands and thousands of years ago. The generations of the past have long gone by; their ashes have long been dispersed. But we, with our desires, our expectations, and our regrets, we are still what they were. And as we are to-day so will our descendants be for thousands and thousands of years to come, when we and our families have long passed away and our ashes have long been scattered by the winds.

This hurrying and pressing forward of mortals never ceases, and yet how soon comes the end to each man. Each century sees three new generations come into life and pass away. Yet all hurry and press forward, as if life were never to end. They heap up riches and chattels, as though they were to provide for a century; they quarrel, and make war, and negotiate, as though their rule were to last for ever; they solicit and struggle for honours and dignities, as though they could grasp the infinite on earth; they buy and chaffer, accumulate, and build, as though they were never to leave their treasures and their houses; and then they descend into the grave, and bequeath the fruits of their labours to others; and as they once rejoiced in their inheritance after departed relatives so others rejoice at what they inherit from them.

While contemplating the toying and trifling, the working and toiling of men, one might almost be tempted to believe that there is no such thing as death

in the world. Children, youths, and maidens, manhood and old age depart this life, yet those who remain seem to think that these alone were mortal, and that of the survivors none are subject to death. Men return from the graves of their friends or acquaintances either smiling or in tears, and then go their way and forget the dead, in like manner as soldiers on a battle-field behold with indifference their comrades falling on the left and on the right, and the survivors shout their songs of triumph as though the victory had been won by themselves alone.

People speak about all matters; about war and peace, about the partition of countries and nations, about their own plans, about their successful or unsuccessful undertakings, about entertainments and merry-makings, about enmities, marriages, and voyages. But who ever hears conversation turn on eternity, whether it be in numerous assemblies or even when two or three only are gathered together? One might almost suppose that the belief in eternity were an exploded fable, which no one any longer cared to hear repeated, or that such belief had entirely ceased to exist among men. And yet all this is but outward appearance. Nay, men keep silence about it; but it stands before them, and their inward eye is almost constantly fixed earnestly and gloomily upon it. They are silent, but believe; perhaps they put on a smile of incredulity when the subject is mentioned; but they believe and tremble. Maidens adorn themselves for the dance; but even in front of their mirrors the thought of the grave flits through their mind. Indus-

trious men count up their earnings; but even while the gold is jingling in their hands the thought of death rises in their minds. Princes wrap themselves in their purple, and grasp the sceptre of command; but even on the throne, in the full consciousness of their power, the thought of eternity flashes involuntarily upon them. Though all are silent on the subject, it is ever before them. Appearances are outward; truth dwells hidden in secret in the heart.

And thus each one silently connects his outer life with his inward life, but lets no one into his secret. Each one believes in God and in eternity; but how he believes, and how he keeps his faith, that he divulges to no one. In the secret depths of his own mind only, he communes trustingly with God, and receives His revelations. Each one fears that were he to betray to others his secret of secrets, it might be desecrated; and he feels that even the most delicate objection raised would wound him, though he might be little disposed to refute it; for that which we believe, and that which we are in our innermost being, that is our real self; and this we would not have any strange eye to behold, or any strange doubt to touch. That which we show to the world is but an outward garment of prudence—a mere semblance of ourselves. Each one knows this of his fellow-man, and respects his secret, and along with this his outward semblance, for each one demands the same respect for himself and for all others.

It is not necessary to teach men that they live a

twofold life here below, for every man knows by his experience that it is so. But the nature of this twofold life is different in each, according to the degree of mental development attained. One prizes his earthly, sensual life, more highly than his inner and eternal being; another values both equally; a third feels distinctly that the worth of this earthly existence is far inferior to that of eternal life.

The rude savage, whose powers of mind are still undeveloped, and who therefore follows blindly his instincts, and seeks only to gratify the wants of his body; the child, who lacks experience, and therefore lives but in the present, and plays with the flowers that grow on graves, without the slightest suspicion that he shall himself one day sleep in the earth; the subtle thinker, who, misled by the false culture of his mental powers, and by the strength of his passions, has allowed himself to sink back into a state of animalism, and who, in his perversion of intellect, would fain persuade himself that everything is of the earth, earthy—that everything is chance—that when man breathes his last breath, everything is over—all these stand on the same level, on the lowest step of spiritual development. Still closely bound in the fetters of the body, like the animal, they have no perception of a higher life, or any idea of the elevation of spirit that renders it possible. The world in the midst of which they live is everything to them; beyond this, nothing has any value in their eyes.

However, by far the greater number of men have a

certain inward religiosity, which bears more or less resemblance to the religion that they profess with their lips. They know that they will not cease to exist, though their bodies die; they know that they have to prepare for a better life yon side the grave; but their conceptions of the value of the present and the future life are still confused and imperfect. Too strongly attached to those matters which surround them daily, and which are pleasant to their senses and agree with their tastes, they value this world as highly as they value heaven. They would fain enjoy all that this world has to give, and their greatest exertions are directed towards securing such enjoyment. At intervals, it is true, they also think of eternity, and flatter themselves that by repeating long prayers, by giving alms, by attending church, and by taking the sacraments, they will be able to satisfy the Deity, and to secure for their souls a higher and more blessed state of existence after death. These men see not the great general connexion between the here and the hereafter. They would fain satisfy their animal desires here below, and yet hope to become suddenly higher spirits in the blessed abodes above; they allow themselves to indulge here below in the works of the flesh, such as pride, deception, voluptuousness, and envy, and they hope, through the merits of Jesus Christ, or through the intercession of saints, to obtain pardon for all their sins, and to attain to perfection in the other world. Upon the whole, they belong to the present; the world is their chief concern; as long as they are in it they give them-

selves up to it. To their short-sighted eyes eternity is too distant to be clearly discerned. They are still too little conscious of their dignity as spirits, therefore that which is earthly is of so much more importance in their eyes than that which is spiritual.

The more a man himself is worth, the less worth has this fleeting world and all evanescent things, in his eyes; the more inclined he is to place God, eternity, and virtue above all else. He who has got so far as to be perfectly content with little, is he likely to care for heaps of gold? He who has got so far as to discern how blindly men judge according to appearances only, and how little they are inclined to acknowledge and to honour true merit, or to repay benefits with gratitude—is he likely to attach much importance to the opinion of the great multitude, or to the acquisition of worldly honours and consideration? He who has once tasted the bitter sorrow of being deprived of his fortune or of his good name by the malignant deeds of evil-minded men, or has stood broken-hearted by the death-bed of a beloved object, be it mother, father, child or friend—is he likely still to cling with blind passion to the goods of this earth, when he has learnt by such painful experience, that he who attaches himself too strongly to that which must pass away, prepares for himself the most cruel sufferings?

On the other hand, the wise man who recognizes the nothingness of all earthly matters, and who for the sake of his own peace of mind refrains from attaching himself passionately to any of these, because he clearly

discerns that inward, indestructible happiness cannot be based upon the fulfilment of external desires—that true peace and contentment of mind, far from being increased by the desire for luxury, honours, riches, admiration, can only be destroyed thereby—that the consciousness of having fulfilled great duties, of having freed oneself from the influence of the passions and of vulgar prejudices, that oneness with God, and walking through this chequered life in the exalted yet humble spirit of Jesus, can alone establish lasting happiness—he who feels this becomes a more divine being, and in his eyes life loses its value. Though his heart may from time to time beat more warmly for some one earthly object, he can nevertheless repeat with truth the words of the wise and experienced disciple of Christ, who was exalted above every earthly fate: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philipp. iii. 13, 14.)

Is there one among us who, however perfect he may be, can say with truth: "I have already reached the goal! I have accomplished my task! There is naught earthly to which my heart clings with overweaning love!" Ah, he who can speak thus, must he not be more than mortal? Let us therefore beware of forming exaggerated notions of what is meant by renunciation of the world. We still walk in the flesh; our mortal bodies have their wants, which, in accordance with the

will of the Creator, must be satisfied, if we would not become suicides. Until the very last moment of life, our sensual requirements must, according to the eternal laws of nature, be satisfied. The instincts and desires which belong to our carnal nature are, in as far as they conduce to maintain life and bodily health, by no means sinful, but on the contrary pure and good. We are, however, apt to make one or other of these desires too predominant, either by over-stimulation or by undue indulgence of it ; this engenders mental passion, and as a consequence immoderate attachment to some one earthly object or another.

Man is, therefore, as long as he lives, engaged in a constant struggle with the sensuous world, at one moment attracted by it, and the next repelling it. He tears asunder the bonds that fetter him too closely, and puts on new ones. He can never thoroughly emancipate himself, and yet it ought to be his constant endeavour to free himself from the influences of what is merely sensuous. Even in his last hour he will have to say with St. Paul: "Not that I count myself as having comprehended, or that I be already perfect!"

But one thing let us all say: Forgetting those things which are behind, I reach forth unto those things which are before. I honour the wants and requirements of external life ; but my higher life, walking in the ways of the Lord, virtuous willing and doing, rises above all that is perishable. I will govern my inclinations and my aversions, and will not allow myself to be governed by them. I will do what is right, what is

noble, what is useful to others, however much my other inclinations may be opposed to this. Not human approval merely, not the praise of my fellow citizens, not the blame of the great multitude, not ambition, nor either the hope of gain in other ways, shall determine me to do that which, according to my innermost convictions, is right, and godlike, and worthy of a disciple of Jesus. The world can neither reward nor punish my spirit. It finds its reward in likeness to God, and its most fearful punishments in deviation from His ways. Therefore I shall not allow the enjoyments of this world either to lure me to what is evil or to what is good; for they are meant to serve the body, not the spirit. But forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

This world, though it possess much that is pleasant to me, and much that I might desire, is not the final goal of my existence. God has called me to a heavenly inheritance, to a spiritual life, to a state of perfection, of the extent and glory of which I cannot now in my human frame form any conception, though a vague presentiment thereof floats in my spirit. This eternal existence, this likeness to God, this unclouded comprehension of God, of myself, and of the universe, this state of holiness in the infinite Holiness,—this is the mark towards which I press, this is the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But this my goal, and this my calling through God I have learnt to know

in Christ and through Christ. For it is He that shed light through the deep darkness of life; and therefore He is truly called the Light and the Life. It is He who, by His revealed word, has led me up, from endless confusion, from the depths of error, to God, to the Father of the universe, and to endless bliss. I shall be with God, shall find Him in the abodes of bliss, if I will but follow Jesus; for He, that is to say, His virtues, are the way to true life. And the virtue of Jesus is to do the will of the Father. And the will of the Heavenly Father is that we should love Him above all things, and that we should strive to make every one of our fellow-beings with whom we are brought into any kind of relation, as happy as we would endeavour to make ourselves.

Every true disciple of the Divine Master, therefore, attaches but little value to the present existence. He does not waste hours on the adornment of his perishable body, the destiny of which is to return to dust; and though pleased to have gained the esteem of good men, he does not allow himself to be made to waver in his duties by the approval or the disapproval of his fellows. What he wills and does, he does not because of the judgment of men, but from love of Jesus—that is to say, from love of holiness. He rejoices in friendship, in the tender sentiments of love given and received, but he remains, nevertheless, master of his feelings. LOVE is immortal, and spiritual beings never lose each other in the infinite universe, but MAN is mortal. Therefore the true disciple of the Lord, the

Christian sage, does not build the entire happiness of his existence on the frail life of a human being. Wife, love thy husband; youth, love the maiden thy heart has chosen; father, mother, love thy child! But never forget that death must one day necessarily separate you; and how, then, will it be with your peace of mind, your happiness? Does the thought make you shudder, and do you fear that with the death of the beloved one all peace and all happiness will be lost to you? If so, then however pious and good you may be, you cling too strongly to the world, you attach an undue value to it, you love passionately, immoderately, and therefore you are not free, not happy, and will not be so, until on this point also you have learnt to be strong—until on this point also you are able to raise yourselves, through hope in eternal existence, so far above all that belongs to this earth only, that you can lose that which you love best without losing that inward happiness and that heavenly peace which the consciousness of virtue gives. The less value this earthly life has in your eyes, the greater is your own worth. Then only will you be able to say with the pious but heroic apostle, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him." (2 Cor. v. 6, 8, 9.)

Whither has this meditation led me? Here I

stand, placed beyond myself, as it were, and looking at myself, at the world, and looking, O my God, up to Thee! And while gazing at all those things in the world which most especially attract me—at all those objects which, when I am near unto them, make my heart beat more joyfully, and which, were I to lose them, would precipitate me into inexpressible grief—I take the measure of my own worth. As yet, alas, I am far from having reached perfection, for I still love and fear too much from a life which ought not to call forth passionate attachment or passionate fear. As yet I cling too strongly to much that is neither good for my inward peace, for my inward happiness, or even for my virtue. Not that I ought to renounce all the sweet and noble pleasures that THY love offers me here on earth, but that the perishable should not conquer that which is eternal in me, is Thy commandment; to fulfil this ought to be my object!

Lord, teach me to remember how short are my days on earth, how uncertain all the goods of this life, so that, without straying from Thee, I may enjoy them with wise moderation, and submit to their loss with noble resignation. This is the true renunciation of the world which Thy Son, Jesus, the Messiah, recommends to us.

Lord, teach me to remember that this abiding upon earth is but a point in my eternal existence, that my true life will be in heaven. That which awaits me beyond the grave is unknown to me, and were it known to me, I should be unable to comprehend it.

Can the child who still clings to its toys as the only source of enjoyment, conceive the nobler pleasures of riper years? Thus we, also, here below walk in faith and not by sight.

Lord, teach me to remember my own value, that the value of this life may be abased in my eyes. Give me strength, let Thy Holy Spirit be ever with me; thus only shall I free myself from the luring charms of the perishable, and from the thraldom of passion. Thou, O Lord, art the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Amen.

GOD'S RULE.

In the soul's kingdom God alone bears sway.
Dare men—dare dust—deny or disobey?
Who rules above, rules also here below—
To Him man's wisdom is an idle show.
A yoke of iron to the scorner's neck,
Thy word shall crush him, and Thy rod shall break;
Then hastes he, ere Thy judgment wake, to win
Thy pardon, Lord, and to confess his sin.

But should God send His blessing on the land,
And guard the people with His sheltering hand,
Who can withstand His will? His servants find
Their foes dispersed, like chaff before the wind—
Therefore, ye nations, be His powers adored!
Ye kingdoms, bow in worship to the Lord!
Let Him bear rule—for He is God alone,
And what He doeth, that must be well done.

(PSALM xlvi. 10.)

BE still, and know that I am God! Thus speaks the voice of the Lord to us from out of the great events of the world. That which princes and peoples have for years unanimously desired, and for which they have striven, is seldom attained. Something different from what we expect is ever occurring. Few persons have understood this. They believe that to be the doing

of man, which is the ruling of God. In like manner many changes have taken place which mortals in their blind folly would fain have prevented. They believed that there was no salvation, no happiness for them except in the old state of things. They strove to bring back the past by violence, and thus rendered themselves miserable, and made the present ever more new. That which the hand of God has once struck down is never to rise again. Princes and peoples have struggled, but the past has not come back, while the new structure, contrary to the wishes of all, has become ever more perfect and more firmly established. In vain are the ravings and the fury of man; what is to be, comes to pass, nothing more and nothing less. Everything has its limit, which no man can overstep. The mightiest are checked in their career by an invisible hand.

Be still and know that I am God! Bow to the will of the Lord! Ye seek with all your art and power to conjure the past back from the grave into which it has sunk. True wisdom would recommend you to accept and to utilise the new state of things so as to make it productive of more strength, more peace, more well-being, and more joy than could ever have grown out of the old state. Those are unwise who disdain the good which the present affords, because of the better things which the future may have in store; but more unwise still are they who disdain the present because they desire that yesterday should become to-morrow. When did the stream of time stand still, or

when did the course of the world turn back? Everything speeds forward, nothing remains ever the same. The good see good in everything; the wise know how to select the best from all things.

Recognise the ruling hand of God! He has struck down the exalted, and raised up the humble. Who is like unto Him in might? Who could stay His power to do as He listeth? Of what avail were the mightiest fleets that ever rode the waves? He sent a blast of wind, which raised the billows, and the ships were dispersed, and what no mortal had looked forward to took place; and what human intellect had cunningly precalculated came to nought. Of what avail were the mightiest hosts of armed men? He breathed upon them, and it was the breath of death. Their corpses and their arms lay strewn upon the battle-field; and what they were to have accomplished remained undone; the weak grew strong, and the mighty powerless. God willed it so. Of what avail were the cunning plans of the leaders, the valour of the commanders? A trifle upset the gigantic projects; a grain of dust stopped the great clock-work; the valiant hero stepped unknowingly into the path of the deadly ball speeding towards him, and he who threatened the lives of thousands, lay lifeless himself in the dust. No one is mighty before the Lord. Wise men have been left to sigh in dungeons, yet their words have inspired millions of other men, and have changed the destinies of entire continents. No one knows for what God has destined him. Each one of us is an instrument

in the hand of Providence. Thine, O man, is the good will evinced in thine acts, but the results depend on God. Thou art answerable for the will, the consequences belong to the government of the world. Be still, saith the Lord, and know that I am God!

Know Him, the only One, the Ruler of all, who dwells above us in majestic mystery; who regulates the course of the suns and the moons, and the gentle flights of the butterflies; who judges the deeds of kings and beggars by the same standard; who determines the weal and woe of entire divisions of the globe, and of the humblest and most obscure family with equal wisdom; without whose will nothing happens. He has saved innocence when condemned, and drawn the secret criminal into the light of day, and laid bare his hidden sufferings, so that all have shuddered back from them. When an honest man has become the victim of the slander of envious minds; when he has fallen a prey to the most infamous suspicions, and all means of justifying himself in the eyes of the world fail, and every appearance is against him, and a circumstance that had until then escaped all observation suddenly testifies in favour of the slandered man, and his righteousness is finally as honourably vindicated as the malignity of his contemptible persecutors is thoroughly unveiled,—this circumstance (which you call accident) is a sign of the ruling hand of God.

Often one hour, one minute has sufficed to bring to light the sins which have been committed in secret by

evildoers, who have long succeeded in hiding in darkness their nefarious acts, be it of cruel usury, of dishonest acquisition of inheritance, of oppression of widows, of cunning overreaching of the weak and good natured, of fraudulent use of the property of others; or be it of secret intrigues against the good name of one whom in public they pretended to honour, or of calumnious betrayal of one whom they praised to his face. The ray of light which on such occasions has fallen through an unobserved chink into the chambers of iniquity, and has revealed the deeds of darkness in all their hideousness—this ray shows us the ruling hand of God! For such is the holy law of the entire universe: that which is condemnable can never escape its condemnation. When the disgusting diseases brought on by secret licentiousness at last betray to the whole world the conduct of the dishonourable hypocrite; when the enervated valetudinarian reaps in early death the fruits of his incontinence; when a word spoken without reflection, or a drop of blood which has remained uneffaced, or the prattle of a child, or a handful of fresh earth, or a faithful animal, or a change of colour in the cheek, has, after the lapse perhaps of years, delivered into the hands of justice the author of a murder, a secret poisoner, a revengeful cut-throat, oh, say not that it was accident, for it was God's ruling hand! To every secret sinner comes the day of judgment; and were he to heap mountains on the evidences of his misdeeds, though only dark night, or silent walls, or solitary forests were the witnesses of his crime—the mountains

will be dispersed like dust before the wind, and discover what was hidden beneath them; the stones of the wall will speak and reveal his guilt; the leaves of the forest will become rustling witnesses, and the avenging flash of lightning will descend from the cloudless sky. Be still, saith the Lord, and know that I am God!

Recognize the ruling hand of God. He alone is the Lord, who raiseth up the broken-spirited, who healeth the wounded, who strengtheneth the weak, who comforteth the repining, who protecteth the helpless. Neither in heaven nor on earth is there any such thing as the rule of accident; there is an all-seeing, wise, loving Power, which guideth all things to good, not along the paths of chance, but according to the eternal law of goodness. Though men may, in the strength of their uncurbed passion, rage hostilely against each other; though might and cunning may for a time cause error to prevail instead of truth; though the senseless wishes of an impure and selfish multitude may run counter to each other: wherefore should ye tremble, O ye of little faith? God rules.

God rules! Therefore that which is hidden will at last come to light, crime will be unmasked, and all evil will meet with its deserts. Therefore only that which is good in itself, and just and true, will eventually conquer and prevail. Has not the experience of the world repeatedly shown how entire nations, swayed by fashion and established custom, have endeavoured to stamp error with the impress of truth, and that yet their

efforts have proved vain? Have not tyrants on their thrones endeavoured, with proud arbitrariness, to make their folly accepted as wisdom, have they not banished truth as treason, and shamefully trodden under foot every right of humanity? Poor impotent sinners! Their dust has been scattered to the winds, their race has been extinguished, only their names survive, as monuments of their iniquity. Have not obstinate and selfish rulers sought to force back their people into ignorance and barbarism, that they might the easier be held in the fetters of slavery? But the rulers of the world and their audacious dreams have been destroyed by a breath from the lips of some God-inspired Sage, and mankind has come forth into the light, and the powers of darkness have fallen. Their anathemas, their funeral piles, their dungeons have been in vain. Therefore, Be still, saith the Lord, and know that I am God!

Recognize the rule of God in all thy unfulfilled wishes; recognize it in all thy hopes fulfilled. In regard to both, love has been active for good. For this is the end of creation. Even when thy heart bleeds most painfully, even when the most sacred bonds are severed—at the death-bed of husband or wife, parent or child, sister or brother, when it seems to thee as if such death were impossible, as if God could not will it—when weeping, sobbing in thy solitary chamber thou stretchest up thy arms to heaven, and askest "Wherefore, ah, wherefore must this be?"—even when

the loved one has been taken away at last, and thy every joy in life seems gone—even then it is God's hand that ruleth for the good of thy loved one; and—however painfully thy tender and affectionate heart may bleed—for thy good also!

The inner worth and the sincere religiosity of men, is more easily ascertained by the manner in which they contemplate the future, than in the view they take of the present or the past. All men are at length reconciled to the past, and habit enables them to bear with the present: but it is not so easy to look forward with indifference or calmness to that which may come. The more a man fears from the future, the less is the worth of his heart, the less the sincerity and depth of his religiosity. The more cheerfully and trustfully he looks forward to the days that are coming, the purer is his mind, the truer his religion.

For weak, sensuous persons, strongly attached to what is earthly—persons to whom what they eat and what they drink, their household furniture, their money, their worldly position and the consideration in which they are held by others, are the most important matters, must, of course, be more fearful of the future than others, because they have set their hearts on things that must perish. They must tremble in spite of all their trust in God; for they know beforehand that God will not leave them for ever the joys of the senses. Their own consciences tell them that they cling more to what belongs to the dust than to what is divine

and eternal: that they value mere worldly appearances more than the virtue that raises us above the world.

The truly God-fearing and God-trusting Christian, on the contrary, looks cheerfully towards the future. It terrifies him not because it may bring punishment for hidden sins; for he is guiltless though not faultless. Whatever wrong he may have done he at once endeavours to make amends for. He has done all that man can do, and that a follower of Jesus is bound to do. He looks cheerfully into the future. Whatever God may have ordained, whether it be war or peace, riches or poverty, joyful intercourse with beloved objects, or the death of the latter—storm or sunshine—he knows that God rules. And when he sees the dark thunder cloud rolling towards him, it is God's voice that says to him: Be still, and know that I am God.

Why then should I fear, O Lord, if it be Thee, my God, my Father, who sendeth forth the thunder cloud of fate? Without Thy will how can it harm me? And can it be Thy will to render me miserable—me Thy child, whom Thou hast created and destined for eternal bliss? Thy helpless child, who holds everything he possesses from Thee, O Almighty God? Nay, I feel no uneasiness. I fear not my own death—for what is death but the dissevering of the bonds of earth, freedom to the immortal soul, union with Thee—what then should I fear? Give or take; exalt me or abase me; let me be the joy of my friends or fall the victim of

mine enemies—I accept with thankfulness whatever fate may befall me. For Thou art my Father; Thy love is my highest good; virtue my palladium; all else belongs to the dust and must sink into the grave.

I am still—still and full of trust—trustful and joyful, for I know that Thou art God—my God—for ever! Amen.

THE POWER OF THE CONSCIENCE.

Holy God! unless a measure
  Of Thy Spirit fill my heart,
Nought of earth can give me pleasure,
  Or a lasting joy impart.

Gold and goods must turn to ashes,
  Even while we bid them stay;
And the bloom of beauty passes,
  Hastening onward to decay.

But a conscience, pure and holy,
  That no thought of sin can pale,
Sweetens life, however lowly,
  Makes e'en death's last terrors fail.

(2 Cor. i. 12.)

In every human breast a mysterious and holy voice speaks at times, and its utterances are understood by all, of whatever religion they may be; even by the heathen, who accepts not the light of the Gospel. "Man," saith this voice, "be just," and no flattery, no displeasure, no reasoning can silence it. Ever and ever it repeats, "Man, be just!"

In vain the sceptic, who mocks at religion, would make himself believe in his shameless frivolity, that

everything is the effect of chance, that piety and faith are but popular superstitions, that Christianity is but a political bridle by which to hold the barbarous masses in check; in vain he refuses to believe in virtue, or believes it to be mere hypocrisy or irrational enthusiasm; in vain he endeavours to persuade himself that the promptings of prudence, cunning, and self-interest, are the highest law; in vain would he deny the existence of a God in the infinite creation, of a righteous Judge above the stars,—the inward voice cries, "Man, thou speakest false." But the earth trembles, and temples and palaces sink into ruins; friends by his side descend into the grave and become dust and ashes; amid a fearful conflict of the elements, the thunder rolls through the heavens, and the lightning flashes, and flames consume his dwelling. The scoffer scoffs no more. "There is a God," cries the voice within, and in faltering accents he repeats, "There is a God!"

In vain the profligate sneers at the holy voice within his own bosom, and calls it the echo of a nursery tale, a consequence of his education. He imagines himself to be more enlightened than the noblest spirits that have lived. He rises above what he thinks mere prejudice, practises his sins in secret, and looks scornfully around, asking: "Where is the Judge who is to judge me?" The inward voice cries: "Hide thy sins beneath a world, still sooner or later they will come forth into the sunlight." In vain he rushes into the turmoil of the world; he carries the firebrand

in his heart — a firebrand from hell, which secretly consumes him. In vain he strives to free himself from the laws that govern the sacred order of the universe, and according to which only that which is good can prosper, and evil can only generate destruction; he is carried along by an unknown power, which links him and his deeds to this eternal organization. Destruction springs even from his most secret sins; he cannot prevent it. He is ever flying from himself; his whole being is annihilated by unceasing gnawing anxiety, the inward voice is ever crying: "God is Omnipresent!" In vain thou persecutest the truth with slanderous tongue, and strivest to wrest from merit its well-deserved crown. What thy lips traduce, thy heart is forced to honour even against thy will, and thou endest by heaping upon thyself the contempt of the world. In vain, heartless tyrant, dost thou hunt down the innocent, in order to justify thine own crimes; in vain dost thou persecute them by means of false oaths and false witnesses, by means of suborned judges, dark dungeons, and cruel tortures; thou canst not conquer them. They look in thy face with a fearless smile; they are serene in the midst of the tears forced from them by their sufferings, whilst thou tremblest in the midst of thy triumphs; they repose full of joy in their dungeon, whilst thou sittest full of dread at the luxurious banquet. Thou mayst drag them to the scaffold, but their death will be their triumph and thy condemnation.

Such is the power of conscience, which, like an in-

visible angel, is ever present in the assembly of mortals, supporting truth, and justice, and innocence, though they be deserted by all men; laying hold of the criminal, though he fly into the most hidden caverns; and wrestling with the sinner, though he be seated on a throne, or surrounded by armed hosts.

The Divine law, that tells of what is good, and true, and right, is written in the human heart. Therefore, even in "the heathens, the conscience bears witness, their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or excusing one another."

The conscience is a teacher. It guides even the most ignorant in the path of right. Let no one endeavour to excuse himself to the world, and still less to himself or to God, the Omniscient, with the pretence that he knew not how to distinguish between right and wrong.

Conscience teaches it, and conscience is incorruptible and just! If thou follow this holy voice within that leads to good, thou wilt never willingly go astray, thou wilt never knowingly do evil, and thou wilt ever enjoy internal self-contentment. Listen to the voice of this monitor, however loudly and temptingly thy senses may clamour against it. Listen to its voice, particularly in doubtful cases, when contending desires threaten to mislead thee; when what thou considerest thy interests cannot perhaps be maintained without injustice to others; when thou mayest perhaps have it in thy power to do much good, if thy self-interest and self love will but consent to a sacrifice. Perhaps thou

mayst be plotting vengeance against one whom thou hast reason to dislike; thy conscience says: "Be nobler than he, and put him to shame by thy magnanimity!" Perhaps lascivious thoughts disturb thy mind, and that carnal lust tempts thee to commit a base act, to vicious indulgence; thy conscience cries: "Villain, wouldst thou infuse the poison of vice into the bosom of innocence? Wouldst thou, like Satan, destroy a paradise?" Perhaps thou covetest another man's property, or perhaps some great advantage, which might be secured by a slight deception; thy conscience cries: "Hold! seek not an advantage that would make thee despicable in thine own eyes!"

For what art thou profited, if thou shalt gain the whole world and lose thine own soul? Perhaps thy vanity tempts thee to amuse thyself and others by exercising thy wit in making another person appear ridiculous; thy conscience cries: "Bold and licentious tongue, how soon wouldst thou not become silent, were he whom thou art mocking, to draw near."

The conscience is an earnest and just teacher; and only in following its hints and warnings, canst thou find true happiness. Do not persuade thyself that it is otherwise; seek not by subtle reasoning to find the means of satisfying thy forbidden wishes and vicious tendencies, without violating thy sense of right and of decency. Thy reasonings are false. It is an evil deed that thou art tempted to commit, and behind it lurks secret remorse. The conscience admits of no compromise. Thou thinkest that thou canst bargain

with it; but, weak man, thou art only bargaining with thine own shame.

The conscience is a teacher endowed with Divine authority. It says: "Do this, and avoid that, *for it is right*, and *because it is right*, and not because it may be to thy advantage, or it may bring down shame upon thee. Thou must do what is right and good because it is so, and without reference to any thing else. Thou must do it even should it not be conducive to thy worldly interests. Thou must do it even should it be injurious to these." Thus speaks thy conscience, O man, and thus speaks Jesus Christ. For if thou doest that only which is of use to thee, then thou hast thy reward. (Matt. vi. 1, 2.) Thou art prudent and calculating, but not virtuous.

The conscience also warns! All men have failed, and whosoever has failed has heard the warning voice of the inward judge.

Even as children, when engaged in play, or in trifling household occupations, we feel a certain misgiving when we allow ourselves to be led by our own evil propensities, or by tempting examples, to the commission of some wrong.

How violently does not every heart beat before the intended performance of an evil deed. The thief feels it before he stretches out his hand towards property that is not his; the voluptuary feels it before he stammers forth the tempting words; the perjurer feels it before he opens his lips to utter the false oath; the traitor feels it when, driven by covetousness or ven-

geance, he goes forth to betray his friend, his country, or those in authority over him. With fearful earnestness the conscience warns them of their sin, and the nearer the time for its consummation draws, the more earnestly the admonishing voice is raised.

The struggle of a man with himself, before he makes the first step towards an evil deed, the conflict with his expostulating conscience, is, as it were, a conflict with his good angel, who is attempting to hold him back and to save him from falling. Alas! in vain are the touching appeals of the angel. The deed is done. The angel draws back in sorrow and silence. The sinner falls from bad to worse, and ever more sorrowfully, ever fainter sounds the voice of the heavenly messenger, who is withdrawing from him.

Behold yon uncorrupted youth: he is about to practise his first deception. He endeavours to speak; but his tongue refuses to obey. He walks, and his steps are uneven and faltering. His inward confusion appears in every movement. He endeavours to lift up to you his eyes, which used ever to gaze fearlessly into yours; but he can no longer encounter the look of the righteous; he dreads lest you may discover the uneasiness of his conscience. As yet he is only wavering, this former favourite of all good people; he still blushes with shame at his unworthy self. Were he to look into the glass he would loathe the sight of himself. Young men who have hitherto held fast the jewel of a pure heart, and who in its strength have walked freely and proudly through the world, while

old men in their corruption have envied you—and you, tender-hearted daughters of excellent parents, oh, listen to the warning voice of your good angel, so that it may never abandon you! Bear the sweet innocence of your youth unspotted through the world in spite of its vices and immoralities. Bear it unsullied in your bosoms even in mature manhood, when you shall be fathers of families, or wives and mothers; oh, you will have your reward, for you will be bringing the heaven of your childhood over into the days of your old age.

Young man, behold the enervated profligate, who has wasted the blessing of health, and is staggering towards an early grave; behold the dishonourable villain, who knows not what happiness is, though surrounded by the riches which he has acquired by unfair means, because to such ever clings a curse; behold the murderer, who in his passion slew his brother, now tottering, pale and terrified, to meet his judge.

O daughter, behold the fallen maiden, whose life, which has become a dishonour to her family, is consumed by secret sorrow because she listened too thoughtlessly to the seducer; behold yon mother, despised by her own children, because of her avarice, her disorder, and her coarseness,—all these unhappy beings once felt the warnings of conscience as you feel them, yet dared to set them at nought.

The conscience punishes. The good angel flees when the wrong has been committed; but the evil angel awakens, and with him suffering. Instead of the wonted cheerfulness, fear now takes possession of

the heart. Never yet did thistles bring forth good fruit, and never yet has an evil action led to good. Thou mayst perhaps succeed in concealing thy misdeed for years, but its consequences reach through eternity, and will one day betray thee. An accident, an event which thou hast never anticipated, will, at a time when least of all thou wouldst have expected it, bring thy shame to light. Thou canst never more feel secure. The old and terrific proverb is but too true: "Ne'er was thread so finely spun, that it doth not at last meet the eye of the sun." And in your case also it will be verified.

Could we look into the hearts of men, we should see many an individual, when alone, tortured by his bad conscience, feeling as if he were abandoned by God and man, and deeply despising himself; we should see how every recollection of an upright character reminds him of his own degradation; how the most harmless word spoken by another may pierce his heart like a dagger; how the apparently most insignificant circumstance will startle him out of his hardly won feeling of security. Verily, the pain caused by the serpent tooth of remorse far outweighs any gratification that may have been felt in the hour of sin.

The tortures of an evil conscience embitter every pleasure. And even should the evil doer succeed in stifling its voice during the distractions of the day, at night the consciousness of his misdeeds stands like a ghost by his bedside. He longs for sleep, but the

remembrance haunts his dreams. Manifold and great are the sufferings to which man is subject, but the most terrible of all is remorse. It hates the light of day, which may reveal its cause, and shudders at the darkness in which treachery may be lurking. It shuns solitude, where the memory of the misdeed speaks the loudest, and flies from society that it may not betray its own secret.

The heart conscious of guilt is ever anticipating with trembling the moment when its secret will cease to be one. But the pain of this constant fear and of its never ceasing self-reproaches at length reaches such a point, that the sinner, in order to escape from these torments of hell, comes forward and confesses his guilt. How many a murderer has been thus tortured until he has gone before a magistrate and confessed his crime! How many a deceiver has been stretched on the bed of death, seemingly unable to die, until he had made amends to the person he had deceived, or to his children.

Such is the mighty power of the conscience! It may for a time be lulled to sleep, but it can never be entirely destroyed; and the later it awakens, the more dreadful it is. The sinner becomes a prey to remorse, he reaps the fruit of his shame, even though it be not before he finds himself on the very brink of the grave, into which, in his hopeless despair, he fears to descend.

The conscience rewards! And its rewards are as divine, as the vengeance of betrayed virtue is terrible.

He who has a clean conscience, sees friends in all whom he meets. He avoids no one; he has no reason to shun any one. He pities the vicious and the criminal; he loves the righteous, and to all he is open and candid. His mind is ever cheerful. Each pleasure that the passing hour may give he enjoys in full draughts, and when misfortune overtakes him, he bears it with manly courage, strengthened by the feeling that he is worthy of a better fate, and that his sufferings are not owing to his own fault, and that God is with him.

Behold persecuted innocence: supported by the pride of a pure conscience, it leaves the palace which is the abode of injustice, and chooses in preference the beggar's staff; with divine calm like that of Jesus in Gethsemane, it addresses its persecutors in His words and says: "I am He that ye seek!" No earthly shame can diminish its dignity, no sufferings can deprive it of its heavenly peace. To it the dark prison is converted into a place of bliss, when it mounts the scaffold it celebrates the greatest triumph; and humanity weeps above its tomb.

A man who can act with a cheerful and easy conscience, is trusted by high and low. He is quite independent, and may stand forth like a prince, though clad in the garb of poverty. Whoever knows him honours him; and he stands without fear before the throne as before the judgment seat, and looks death steadfastly in the face.

A good conscience is a heaven in the heart, it gives power over the evil minded, is a protector in

need, a sheet anchor in the storms of life, and smoothes the pillow of death.

Holy, holy God! Oh, may this indescribable peace of a good conscience be mine evermore! May I never have cause to blush for my actions before Thee, or before my fellow men. May I never know the terrors of a guilty conscience, never feel the serpent tooth of remorse gnawing at my heart! May I walk through life innocent, and pure, and with child-like simplicity!

I am weak, it is true, and I am conscious of my weakness. Perhaps I may in my thoughtlessness allow myself to be in some measure misled; perhaps I may, in the strength of passion, forget for a moment Thy holy will! If so, then, oh then, my conscience, be thou the guardian of my virtue, my innocence, and my peace!—May the divine sentiments of the true and the noble ever guide me, so that I may not become unworthy of myself, so that I may not fall away from God, or from Thee, O Jesus, my Heavenly Teacher, through whose Spirit I will sanctify myself.

Not all the sweetness of a forbidden deed or wish can compensate for the pangs of never ceasing fear, and inevitable self-contempt; the evanescent pleasure of a moment, enjoyed with anxious heart, can afford no compensation for long hours of remorse.

No, no, my God and Heavenly Father! Not in vain hast Thou implanted in my bosom this judge of my thoughts, my words and my deeds. The voice of conscience is Thy voice: how then can I refuse to

listen to it? Nay, however much it may cost me to curb my evil passions, to restrain my impure desires—in Thy hearing, O my God, I make a solemn promise that I will remain pure and free from reproach; I will rather endure the scoffs of the world, poverty, hunger, misery, nay even death itself, than bear the burden of one evil deed, which dishonours me in mine own eyes. What is man's scorn to me, if I can look up fearlessly to Thee? If I have but Thy approval, the bliss of heaven is already mine.

Oh, may these sentiments and resolutions, which now already spread such sweet joy through my heart, never vanish from my memory! How joyfully may I then receive the happiness of life from Thy hand; how cheerfully shall I then meet all that may befall me; how hopefully shall I close my eyes in death when called.

PEACE IN JESUS.

Thy wisdom, Jesus, Thine alone,
Can wake the blind to see;
Creation's call by it made known,
Tuned nature's praise to Thee;
And by its holy teaching led,
On life's dark dream the day was shed,
And the Creator shown.

Then dwell with us, and let Thy light
Glow on in peace divine,
That by its ray, through error's night,
Unveiled, Thy truth may shine.
From forth Thy temple let it stream,
To house, or lowly cot, the gleam,
Bring joy, for it is Thine.

(JOHN xvi. 33.)

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world!"

THUS spake Jesus to His disciples. How am I to understand the words of the Holy Teacher of mankind?

He says, that He has spoken and taught that in Him we may have peace. Peace *in Him*, that is to

say, in His spirit, not in His body—in His magnanimous and holy principles, in His relations to the Deity and to the world, which ought to become our principles and our relations also. We are to have peace in Him—but with whom are we to be at peace? For where peace is to be established, hostility must have existed. We are to be at peace with God, the Father, the Holy of Holies; with our eternal destination; with ourselves.

Peace in Jesus is the glorification on earth of the human spirit by its own endeavours and through the power of faith, or of the religion of Jesus. And our spirit is glorified when it purifies itself from the dross of earthly evil which clings to it, as it were, and obscures the Divine image in which it is created. This glorification is effected by the victorious coming forth of the spirit out of the slough of common cares, common wishes, common desires, and of all those low appetites, which are at war with its divinity. The spirit, being from God, knows full well what it is that dims its purity and destroys its dignity. And even when it allows itself to be led in slavish chains by the animal desires of the body, by the angry passions, the ambition and the envy of the heart, it feels ashamed of its bondage. Even in the lowest criminals, in robbers and murderers, there is, as it were, a yearning of the spirit after purity, freedom, and likeness to God. However deeply it may be sunk in mere animal life, and however completely it may have forgotten all else, its own high

origin it never forgets, and therefore neither does it forget what it ought to be, and what it might be.

The deep flush of shame that colours the cheek of one who is conscious of his own evil-doings, and who fears detection—what is this but the noble indignation of the spirit at its own degradation? The casting down of the eyes of those who know that they are guilty—what is it but the sign of the self-contempt and self-accusation of the spirit, which cannot entirely conquer its yearning after likeness with God? Theanxiety felt by the unjust, the fear that tortures the criminal, the endeavours of the sinner to conceal his shame, are so many indications of the silent indignation of the degraded spirit, and its protest against the sins that dim its lustre. All the sophistry of animal man is insufficient entirely to brutalize himself, and to make him forgetful of his divine origin. In spite of all, the voice of his higher being speaks loudly and mightily within him. The conscience is the tongue of the spirit.

And the spirit shall know no peace until it has conquered. Every submission to the power of the sensual being, increases its misery. Who has not heard, that in many cases, men, steeped in sin, and who have lacked the courage to raise themselves out of it, have at length found their own degraded condition so intolerable, that they have preferred to die, rather than live on in this state of dreadful enmity with themselves?

We shall know no peace, until we have conquered the violence of those passions and desires that cause

our misery—those passions and desires, the non-satisfaction of which keeps us in a state of constant discontent, and the gratification of which *by no means* promises lasting happiness, nay, in many cases, can only be followed by bitter repentance. And peace is only to be obtained in Jesus, in His great and divine principles.

If our spirits would again draw nigh to God, if the Eternal Father of Light is to recognise in us His children, created in His image, we must seek to attain the candour, the innocence of Jesus, and His power of renouncing all that is of this world only. This is peace in Christ! And without this there is no happiness in happiness, no peace in peace!

"In the world ye shall have tribulation," said Jesus: and is there any one who does not feel that his experience testifies to the truth of these words? Here on earth we have no rest. Everything that surrounds us is pressing tumultuously towards the last resting-point, the threshold of eternity. Everything changes; everything varies; the days pass by and the end of all things draws nigh.

In the world ye shall have tribulation. Was there ever a mortal who could boast of having secured perfect happiness? If there be one among us who has really obtained the object of his wishes, who has acquired great riches, received a lucrative appointment, or distinguished honours, who has triumphed over his adversaries, succeeded in forming a much desired connexion, or in securing retirement from the storms of the world—and who in the first moment of exceeding

joy exclaims: "Now I am quite happy! Now I have not another wish!" how long will this delight last? In a few hours already it begins to subside; after a few days it is superseded by calm, after a few weeks by coldness. Habit engenders indifference. He begins to discover the thorns that belong to the rose, that every joy has its pain, and that light has its shade. New wishes arise, new views are adopted, and soon come new anxieties also. Improved circumstances have brought new cares and new tribulation. There is no lasting peace on earth.

In the world ye will have tribulation. For the world means those earthly things with which the spirit can have nothing in common. The nature of the spirit is quite other. In vain it seeks comfort or happiness in the world. It never finds either. Thence its tribulation. It aspires to something better, and this aspiration remains unsatisfied until it leaves this world. Man can never satisfy this yearning for a better state as long as he looks down into the world, and not up into God's Heaven, where is his home. He can never satisfy this yearning as long as he does not learn to know himself, as long as he continues to look upon himself as an animal more than as a spirit. He can never satisfy this yearning as long as he seeks his highest happiness in what the world can give; for it dwells not there. The ambitious find it not in the highest honours; the voluptuary finds it not in the gratification of his impure desires; the glutton finds it not in abundance of good cheer, the drunkard not in

the costliest wine, the covetous not in his heaped-up gold. For when each has obtained that for which he has laboured, for which he has sacrificed his rest, he has at the utmost secured momentary gratification of his earthly, animal desires, but not happiness, not the fulfilment of all his wishes; because out of that which he has obtained arise new wants, new desires, new anxieties. And the further he proceeds in this false path, the further he deviates from the road that leads to the true goal of the spirit, to all that is divine; in other words, the oftener he is induced to satisfy his desires by unrighteous means, the greater is his tribulation. Peace he finds not.

Therefore spake Jesus, the searcher of the human heart, the heavenly messenger who came to bring true happiness: "In the world ye will have tribulation."

But He said also: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." He overcame the world by throwing the light of eternal truth on all that belongs to the flesh and to sin, and showing men that therein they could find no lasting happiness. He overcame the world, not for Himself, but for the whole race of spirits prone to sin. He overcame the world by lifting up our spirits above that which is merely earthly and transient.

As in each individual human being the rational spirit ought to be elevated above the animal wants of the body, and ought to control the passions and desires which are in opposition to reason and conscience: so the true place occupied by the great realm of spirits,

is between the earthly world and God. Thousands of gradations fill the immense interval between the dust and the Deity. Some one of these, be it higher, or be it lower, is occupied by the spirits. The more sensual a man is, the more he clings to the pleasures of this world, the more unscrupulous he is in satisfying his sinful desires, the lower he stands, the further he is from God; the nearer he is to the animal. The more perfectly the human spirit masters itself: the more power it evinces in resisting that which is forbidden, in suppressing animal desires which pollute its consciousness: the more capable it is of noble self-sacrifice for the benefit of others: the purer, the more exalted, the happier it is, and the nearer to its origin, to God, the Father of Light.

This is the great error of men, that they fail to understand themselves, and the yearning after better things that ever dwells in their hearts: and they descend towards evil, instead of ascending towards truth, justice and holiness. "In the world ye will have tribulation:" only in adopting the meek, just and holy spirit of Jesus will ye find peace. The less you demand of the world, the more happiness will flow into your spirits from above. The less you are concerned about the comforts of life, about the attainment of worldly honours, about the acquisition of wealth, about the enjoyment of vain pleasures; the more you strive to be honest, candid, content with little, free from all reproach, and useful to your fellow men; the more certainly will you be preparing for yourselves a

happiness, independent of all accidents, a peace of mind that no outward storms can disturb. This is peace in Jesus. And it is in order that we may have peace in Him, that His revelations and teachings have been vouchsafed to us. He is the light that illumineth our path: He, that is to say His Holy Spirit, is the way of truth and of life, that leads to God. Through our faults and our sins we are in conflict with God. Without God there is no peace, and through Jesus we find God. Therefore is He called the Reconciler, the Redeemer, the Saviour. O Prince of Spirits, Son of God, who came into this earthly life to seek out Thy brethren, that Thou mightst restore to them the peace of God, their childlike relation to the Father of all spirits, and their union with Him. Thou thoughtest of me also! There is no salvation for me, save in Thee, no peace on earth or on high save in Thee.

In vain will be my endeavours to alter my earthly relations, to improve my position, as long as my whole life and being are more bound up with the world than with Thee. For in the world, and in all that I demand of it, there is tribulation. Even the joy of parents in their children, even the delights of friendship, even the transports of pure love cause tribulation. For whatever belongs to this world must pass away. Loving parents must part from their children, and faithful hearts break in death.

But Thou hast overcome the world—in Thee is peace. Therefore will I also overcome the world, and seek rest and peace in Thee! And even though loving

hearts break in death, I know that spirits do not die, and that their love lives on with them. It is not the dust, not the fleshly covering that is important: and not the dust, but the spirit should the spirit embrace.

O Light of my life, illuminate for me the path that leads to God, the Eternal source of all light. May I never stray from Thee; for in Thee only is there virtue and peace. Should I be a prey to anxiety and care, to remorse, vexation, and tormenting desires, I shall know that I am not in Thee, but in the world; that I am at war with my better self, with Thee, and with God; and I will turn back from my errors to Thy truth. He who thinks and acts in Thy spirit, is in Thee, and has eternal life. Oh, help me to attain it! Amen.

HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE OF GROWTH IN PERFECTION TO BE CARRIED OUT IN DAILY LIFE?

FIRST MEDITATION.

When in my purpose I rejoice,
  Thy steadfast follower to be,
Grant that I oft renew my choice,
  To love Thee, Lord, and only Thee.
And while inspired with holy zeal,
Make me to practise what I feel.

That I may sooner reach the goal,
  Oh, ne'er let sin my time divide,
With Thee, my God; take Thou the whole—
  Then shall no hour to Thee denied,
No needed service left undone,
Accuse me, Lord, before Thy throne.

Let all the treasures I possess,
  My strength, my goods, with joy be given,
Mankind, and so myself, to bless;
  So shall I live for God and Heaven;
So grow into perfection.—Thine
The praise, oh God!—the blessing mine.

(John xii. 26.)

It is not uncommon for people at the commencement of a New Year to determine to adopt higher principles,

to change their mode of life, and to become, as it were, new beings with the new year. They are in earnest, and renew their resolutions at the commencement of many a day and many a week. They may, perhaps, even succeed in remaining faithful to their resolves for some short period. They may for a time seek and find peace within and without by conquering themselves. But gradually their zeal cools. As they become more immersed in the business of life, the good resolves which they formed are thrown into the shade. They find it more convenient, and even think it necessary, to adopt again the former tone, to recommence their former mode of life. By the time the year has gone by, they have returned to the point from whence they started.

Many persons are very ready, when imprudence or any of their pet faults have led them into difficulties, solemnly to renounce in their hearts the special sin that has caused their uneasiness. They recognise with almost exaggerated earnestness that the enjoyment derived from the fulfilment of passionate desires, is not worth the anxiety and grief that follow. But the trouble and difficulty pass away; the repentant sinners recover their repose of mind; they are once more able to enjoy, and lo, gradually they yield again to the evil tendency, though cunningly refraining from extremes. They remain evil-minded as before, and, notwithstanding all their prudence, prepare anew for themselves hours of suffering which they might easily have avoided.

Many again, who are really earnestly bent upon

self-improvement, when praying to God, when engaged in solitary meditation, shudder at their own perverseness and iniquity, and are abashed to find that with all their good will they have not made greater progress in goodness. In solitude they are excellent and full of benevolent feelings; but when they mix with other men, and are engaged in their ordinary avocations, they become different beings, and however hard they may try, they find it impossible to be in all places and at all times the same.

Is there one of us who has not felt this? Is there one of us who has not often experienced that we seem inspired by a different spirit when in solitude or retirement, and when in the midst of the busy turmoil of life? Only look at the congregation when assembled in the house of God! What earnestness, what solemn stillness and devotion in all! Who would believe that the hearts of these people, assembled to pay unanimous homage to the Father of their being, will beat in enmity towards each other, as soon as they shall have crossed the threshold of the temple? Who would believe that these same eyes, now so reverently cast down before the Omnipresent, in daily life, beyond the walls of the sanctuary, frequently look down with pride and disdain on their fellow-men? Who would believe that the very lips which are here giving utterance to pious prayers, or are pouring forth solemn hymns of devotion, could at other times give vent to slander and contempt, to malignant observations and base flattery, to falsehood and deception? In the

temple of God all seem full of virtue and holiness, while in the outer world they are a prey to passions and vices. In the temple all seem to belong to eternity, in their daily life to this world only.

What a contrast! What self-deception, what false appearances! And yet the picture is but too true; who can deny it?

Almost every human being is consequently in contradiction with himself. In one place he sins, in another he repents. At length, disheartened, and discontented with himself, he despairs of the possibility of reaching that perfection which Jesus demands of him, which God wills that he should attain, and which his own conscience tells him that he ought to attain.

Then, finding this inward strife intolerable, he begins to comfort himself with false reasonings. He says to himself: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; the will to do right I have, but the power to carry out my will fails me. It is impossible to become a saint in this life already. Every human being must have some failings. God will not demand more of man than he is capable of rendering. It is not possible that amid the business transactions, and the ordinary dealings and distractions of life, we should always be able to remember the duties which religion imposes upon us; it is not possible that in our intercourse with persons of various characters we can always be thinking of God and of eternity, and of the solemn promises that we have made! Either we must deny our

own nature, and become dreamers though living in the world, or we must retire into solitude, where we have nothing to do but to meditate upon religion."

Such attempts at self-justification are very common among men. We may hear such reasonings every day whenever conversation turns on these subjects. Yet those who utter them cannot but feel that they may serve to excuse the frivolous and the bad, as well as the truly upright. They are uttered before men, and perhaps repented of before God. For it is not thus that our conscience speaks, and Jesus tells us: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am there shall also my servant be; if any man serve Me, him will my Father honour." (John xii. 26.)

But how am I to reconcile this difference between my will and my acts? How am I as a Christian, that is to say, as a truly wise man, consistently to maintain my principles amid the bustle of every-day life?

This question is one of the utmost importance as regards my spiritual welfare, and deserves my earnest attention; for upon the mode in which I answer it, depends the virtue and the happiness of my life. However, it is a difficult question to answer, or at least seems so. Were it otherwise, why should so many still be the prey of this contradiction between their good resolves and their worthless actions? Were it otherwise, why should so few make a hearty beginning to carry out in daily life principles which they cannot but approve?

It is because the good resolutions which we form

in solitude, when engaged in prayer, or during public worship, or immediately after some serious event in life, are the fruits of strong emotion, and not of calm and mature reflection. When our hearts are touched, everything seems easy; afterwards, when we have to put our resolves into execution, it is otherwise. When we are under the influence of strong feeling, the world appears to us in a very different light from that in which it presents itself when we are less excited. Therefore as soon as the emotion has subsided and the mind recovers its usual composure, we begin to perceive that things are not such as we fancied during the moments of excitement, and cannot be so easily effected; that we cannot adapt the world to our feelings, but that we must adapt our feelings to the world.

Our mistake is therefore this, that we make our resolves to reform, to become nobler beings, more worthy of ourselves and of God, during moments of enthusiasm, or of fear and contrition. For all strong emotions are evanescent, and with them vanishes the strength of the great resolve. We are much more likely to carry out what we have previously calmly and deeply pondered upon. For the power of understanding, exercised in reflection, ever remains with us, whereas mere emotion soon subsides.

Many who believe that they will be able to remain faithful to the resolutions formed in moments of solemn mental agitation, but who feel, on the other hand, that they are likely to meet with numerous obstacles in the common walks of life, withdraw as much as possible

from the so-called turmoil of the world, and form a new life for themselves. Carefully avoiding all gaiety, they endeavour to maintain constantly an equable and calm state of mind, and try to awaken in themselves as often as possible the sacred emotions that have led to their desire for reformation. For this reason they pray frequently, assume a tone and manner indicative of contempt for the world, its hopes and wishes, shun as sinful all amusements, however innocent they may be, neglect no opportunity of going to church, and speak ever in a devout tone—observing all these rules even when their minds are in a state utterly at variance with them, and when pursuing avocations quite incompatible with such feelings.

What is the result? A habit of outward decorum and piety; a canting play with feelings, images, and modes of expression; and finally, very frequently an extravagant enthusiasm which remains barren as far as the fruits of an active Christian life are concerned, and such as was never inculcated by Jesus, who sent out His disciples on active errands of usefulness among the people; or else a system of passive hypocrisy, in which language, manner, and pious exercises are but too often in direct contradiction with what is passing in the heart and mind.

The holy religion of Jesus nowhere admonishes to such a life, to such retirement, to such constant assumption of pious demeanour, when we are inclined to enjoy with light hearts the good gifts of God; to such praying and devotional retirement when not moved

thereto in our inmost souls. Nay, Christ demands that our prayers shall not be learnt by rote, shall not be long and tedious, shall not be a mere thoughtless utterance of words. He commands us to take an active and useful part in real life. He did not condemn those who endeavoured diligently to promote the good of the world. He did not demand of kings and of the great men of the earth, that, instead of attending to the wants of the people confided to their keeping, they should withdraw from the world, shun all pomp, and only give themselves up to prayer. Nay, Jesus knew the world, and yet He sent His disciples out into it. He knew how much persecution and suffering they would be exposed to, yet He would not that they should grow effeminate, but encouraged them, saying: "I send you forth like lambs unto wolves: but fear not, and put your faith in the Heavenly Father."

Therefore let no one torment himself with doubts as to the possibility of his progressing in perfection, because he cannot at once put into practice all that which, in moments when his heart is deeply moved, he promises himself that he will do. Let him not think himself incapable of improvement because his most noble emotions are but transient. He has only been mistaken as to the means of improvement he has trusted in. He has endeavoured to render constant and permanent feelings which in their nature are fleeting, and has forgotten that, in domestic as in public life, man can only carry into effect that which he has calmly matured within himself, and the adaptation

of which to surrounding circumstances he has well calculated.

But there is another reason which is also frequently the cause of our despairing too soon of our capacity to remain faithful to our best resolutions: this is, that we undertake too much at a time, and more than it is possible we should ever accomplish.

Thus, for instance, in some solitary hour of meditation we determine to conquer every passion which occasionally leads us to evil. As long as we are alone, as long as no one irritates us, as long as our minds remain calm, it seems very easy to resolve never again to be angry, never to entertain feelings of hatred, never to listen to the temptings of the senses. But one step out into the real world, and everything is changed. Our desires are again awakened, our passions are again aroused. We cannot help resuming our former mode of action towards other men. We are even provoked by them into being far worse than we would desire to be. This is but a natural consequence of our constitution; frequently of the state of the body, of the nature of the temperament, or of the condition of health. We cannot possibly prevent our feelings and passions from being roused, for they are as much part of our being as is every breath we draw. We cannot possibly remain so cold and apathetic as to be able to look with indifference on everything that surrounds or befalls us. Neither does Jesus demand this of us. Even He did not look with indifference on the money changers and traders who desecrated the temple, or on the hypocritical pro-

ceedings of the Pharisees. But by the strength of our will we can prevent the passions which dwell in us, and which have their source in our temperament, from taking an evil direction. How to do this, Jesus teaches us by word and by example.

It follows from this, that to require the total annihilation of all our desires and passions would be an unnatural demand, which would be contrary to the ends of the Deity, and which must destroy either our health or our active piety. To renounce the pleasures of life is to disdain the sweet gifts of God, which He has bestowed for our happiness. To shun men and seek solitude is indeed one means of lulling to sleep the passions which awaken in the bustle of the world; but such renunciation of the world is a renunciation of all the good which we are called by God's will, and the example of Jesus, to perform. The lifeless stone cannot indeed sin; but is it therefore virtuous? The man who retires into solitude to pray and to subdue his passions, while others labour for him, and take care of him: is he not a very useless member of human society? Is he not like unto the servant in the Gospel of whom Jesus spoke, who buried his talent instead of making it fruitful in further blessings? And if even the health of the body escape entire destruction by such unnatural abstinence and self-annihilation, are there not many other passions that will remain, and against which neither praying nor fasting can avail? Does not the unnatural state thus induced, on the contrary,

very often lead to far more unnatural and sinful intemperance?

When the Eternal Creator called man into life, He spake: "It is not good that man should be alone;" and, "In the sweat of his brow he shall eat his bread." Can it have been the intention of the Eternal Son to change the order of the creation and the decrees of the Divine Ruler of the universe?

Not so! We were created to live for each other, and, therefore, with each other. We were created with various capacities and powers, in order that we might serve each other in many ways. Jesus, the Divine Enlightener of the world; His disciples; the early Christians in the first century, did not fly to the desert to escape the turmoil of the world, but entered manfully into life, endeavouring to spread the holy kingdom of God, each one according to his capacity, his power, and his opportunity.

The doubts of many persons as to the possibility of their attaining to a high degree of religious perfection in this world, thus evidently spring from the false views which they take of life, and many a time good intentions have failed to be carried out because they were either merely the result of strong, and therefore unenduring emotions, or because they were at variance with human nature.

And yet God has called us to glory! And yet Jesus has admonished us: "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect!" And yet our own conscience warns us to improve our inward worth!

Is it possible to believe that all these sacred voices should join in demanding the impossible?

Many mortals, indeed, who, held captive in the chains of their sensuality, find the exercise of all higher virtue burdensome, are apt to look upon the lower grades of perfection even as impossible of attainment. Such sybarites, however, who live only for riches and honours, and for the enjoyments and consideration of society, and who avoid every effort towards mental and moral improvement, seek merely to justify their own weakness. To such as these no wise man would listen; and even their own conscience rejects the false reasonings with which they endeavour to pacify it.

Thy yoke is sweet, O Saviour of the world, O Enlightener of all spirits, and Thy burden is light! Why then, being Thy disciple, should I despair of becoming one day like unto Thee? Why should I despair of one day carrying out the good resolutions which I form. Should I, even at times, yielding to my weaknesses, leave the right path and sink on the way—Wilt not Thou, O merciful One, also be merciful unto me? Even the righteous may fail, but they fail against their will. Even the most upright, the noblest of men, are liable to error and rashness; but when they stumble they only rise up the more determined never to fall again; they only endeavour the more zealously to make amends for their fault by acts of charity and goodness—to atone for their momentary dereliction by a long series of virtuous actions.

Oh, Spirit of Holiness, enlighten my soul, that I may choose the true path of the Christian; and give me strength and courage to lead a life of godliness in the midst of the pressure and turmoil of the world, until my goal be reached! Amen.

HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE OF GROWTH IN PERFECTION TO BE CARRIED OUT IN DAILY LIFE?

SECOND MEDITATION.

Grant me a way, oh Lord, and Saviour mine,
Thy praise to show, and prove that I am Thine—
Help me when sin allures with promise fair,
To shun the snare.

Let good-will strengthen me for others' needs,
And time and place still serve for noble deeds,
That piously the work of love be done,
As 'twas begun.

Courage and zeal, Thy will and work demand,
Oh! may the timid pretext never stand,
That for *Thy* purposes my strength may quail,
Or due time fail!

Yes, I will learn to rule this stubborn clay,
Will drive temptation's false delights away,
So that I daily over every sin,
New strength may win.

(Luke ix. 23.)

The pious emotions awakened in hours of devotion or repentance, or on occasion of great and serious events, are not indeed to be held light. They

strengthen the power of our souls, and promote the desire and the resolution to do good.

Yet, neither in Divine things nor in worldly matters must we allow the feelings of the heart to bear sway. He who rests his virtue on feeling only, chooses a very fragile staff. Our feelings in themselves depend much less upon the strength of the mind than on the constitution of the body; and how many changes is not the latter subject to! How variable are not our daily moods!

Persons who are of a very sensitive nature, and so prone to strong feelings that these assume, in a great measure, a permanent character, run great risk of becoming one-sided in their judgments of men and of life in its various aspects, and are apt to look upon all those who feel less strongly than themselves as hard and cold, and wanting in goodness of heart.

The longer a man allows his feelings this power over his judgment and his entire life, the more false does his view of the world become; and his understanding and his reason are eventually as injuriously affected by it, in the same manner as they would be if he allowed similar preponderance to his lower or animal passions. Pious emotions, when allowed to warp the judgment, degenerate into barren enthusiasm, and the wisdom contained in the teachings of Jesus is degraded into a religion of the imagination. A man who, having allowed his feelings to grow and to strengthen at the expense of all his other mental faculties, and who has thus come to believe that he has attained the loftiest height of

human magnanimity, and that the rest of the world is sunk in darkness, unbelief, and vice—such a man is sick in soul.

And if the poor creature turn dizzy on the pinnacle on which he has placed himself, he has but to make one step more and he will probably be plunged in total mental darkness, be given up to visions and miracles, to mysticism and prophesying, or to irreligiosity and total unbelief. For unhappily, the world affords too many examples of how quick is the transition in such minds, and how frequently some insignificant circumstance that convinces them of the self-delusion which they have so long been practising, suffices to destroy all their previous convictions—if indeed that can be termed conviction, which springs exclusively from the feelings. Thus it has always been found that the most senseless, mischievous, and wanton scoffers at religion have, in their earlier years, been religious enthusiasts; and, on the other hand, that irreligious persons, after having run through every possible extravagance, are apt to become sanctimonious devotees in old age. The same cause is at work in both cases. These persons, naturally of an emotional temperament, have allowed their feelings unchecked dominion.

But, O man, not thy heart is immortal—this will decay in the grave with thy body—thy spirit only is so! Not thy feelings are immortal—these will pass away with the heart in which they have their source—only the strength and power of thy spirit is so! Therefore, the feelings of the heart must not be permit-

ted to usurp the dominion over the searching and testing spirit, but must be no more than its assistants and handmaidens.

The religion of Jesus is not a mere play of feelings, but a work of the Spirit for immortal spirits. So also the Deity doth not abide in emotions, but in the highest knowledge of truth, justice, and perfection. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth. But to elicit truth is the work of reason, with which God endowed us that we might discover it.

The lessons which the disciples of Jesus received from their Divine Master, and which they were to practise in life, had not reference to the feelings alone, but to principles, to deeply studied truths. And when I make the great resolve to be in future a more exalted spirit, to strive after likeness to God, after perfection, this ought not to be the effect of some pious emotion only, but of calm and earnest reflection.

When a man intends to sketch out a plan of some great and important undertaking relative to worldly matters, he first weighs and examines calmly and carefully what means will be most likely to help him to achieve his object; considers the circumstances amid which he will have to act; measures the extent of his own powers in respect of the undertaking; and even calculates the obstacles which he may possibly have to encounter, and ponders beforehand on the best means of overcoming them.

And wouldst thou act more thoughtlessly, and with

less consideration in matters relating to divine things, to the well-being of thy immortal spirit, than to such as concern only thy worldly affairs? Or dost thou think that the elevating, perfecting, and sanctifying of thy soul require less effort and reflection than the increase of thy revenue, or of the consideration in which thou art held by the world?

And if it be thy lofty purpose as a Christian, to carry out thy principles in daily life, and really to draw nearer every day to that perfection which God, and Jesus, and thine own better self, demand of thee: then make thy resolution after mature consideration of all that is required to carry it into effect. A lively emotion may give the first impulse to this resolution; but the spark will soon die out, if the spirit do not fan it into a flame, in which it will itself be purged and purified.

Do not begin by making a solemn promise to God that thou wilt at once become a holier being, and that thou wilt conquer all thy faults and all thy passions; for experience ought to have taught thee ere this, that thou wilt be unable to fulfil this rash promise.

On the contrary, ask thyself first: wherein am I most faulty? Which are the defects in my character which more especially lead me to commit unjust acts? And which is the one among these defects which is most injurious to myself and to others? Thou wilt never have any difficulty in discovering these faults, for thy conscience, that is to say, the sacred though faint voice of thy spirit which is yearning for perfection, will aid thee in detecting them.

Then inquire further: "Whence comes this defect? Is it owing to my early education? Or is it a consequence of the power of outward things over me? Or the effect of my temperament? Or is it perhaps caused by a still more deep-seated or concealed passion, or the result of some bad habit indulged in till it has become, as it were, second nature?"

And when thou hast thus fathomed the cause from which thy principal defect springs, then consider the circumstances amidst which thou livest, and the character of the persons by whom thou art surrounded; reflect earnestly upon what would be the most effective means of preventing these from calling forth this fault in you, and of rendering it innoxious to them and to thee. To do this, it is not sufficient to make an impulsive resolution. Thou must take a calm and deliberate survey of all the means that may be available for conquering the fault, whether it arise from thy education, thy temperament, or from habit. Probably thou mayst not succeed in getting the better of it for some days, or even weeks or months. The evil tendency will, no doubt, often assail thee anew; but thou wilt nevertheless be able to keep it in check and gradually to conquer it, if, each time it stirs within thee, thou wilt recall to mind thy noble resolve, and say to thyself: "Now is the time to show strength of mind, and to exercise power over my lower nature." Avoid everything that is likely to tempt thee and to make thee forget thyself; but when thou canst not do so, then exert thyself to the utmost

to master thy feelings, and to act in such manner that thou needst not be ashamed, even were the whole world to witness thy conduct. But never place thyself in the way of temptation in order to test thy strength. They who expose themselves to temptation, are sure, sooner or later, to succumb. The only means of destroying our evil tendencies and of conquering our weaknesses, is by never rousing them. If they are never called into activity, our faults at last die out of themselves.

Do not attempt too much at once. First conquer the greatest obstacles in thy way to perfection, afterwards the others will be the more easily subdued. Attack thine enemies singly, if thou wouldst be victor. To wage war against all, at one and the same time, might prove too much for thy strength, and might end in robbing thee of all energy and hope.

In like manner it is easier, in daily life, to keep a strict guard over thyself, when thou hast only one enemy, though it be the strongest, and the greatest, to observe and to combat. This will allow thee to concentrate thy strength, which must, on the contrary, be divided if thou undertakest ever to keep carefully before thy mind every precept of Christianity, and anxiously to weigh and to test thy every thought and word. To carry out such an attempt exceeds the measure of human strength.

Be without guile, take men as they are, and let thy intercourse with them be simple and straightforward, without always weighing and calculating results;

but never for one moment lose sight of thy chief enemy, thy besetting sin. This must be destroyed, or at least be rendered harmless as regards thyself and others. Together with some prominent faults, thou hast no doubt excellent qualities which endear thee to thy friends. Now, if thou succeedest in divesting thyself of thy worst fault, thou wilt become even more attractive, and wilt be more esteemed by others, while thy self-respect also will increase.

Even in the midst of the turmoil of the world, the difficulty of carrying out a simple resolution like this cannot be very great. The Christian who makes it, will find that he has not undertaken an impossibility, for he will see around him thousands of persons who have in this way divested themselves of, and now abhor, the very fault which still disfigures him. And that which is possible for others, why should it not be so for thee ?

Many persons who have determined to effect in themselves a sudden and entire change of disposition, and who have aimed at rising at once from a state of great unworthiness into one of the purest holiness, have become the victims of their own exaggerated resolutions, and have not unfrequently fallen into the opposite extreme. Thus many a thoughtless prodigal has become a miser, many a profligate has become a suspicious and unsparing decrier of every innocent pleasure. But such conversion as this is not improvement, and the resolution to reform cannot in their cases have had its source in Christian wisdom.

First struggle with thy principal weakness, and keep an ever wakeful eye upon it. If thou attemptest more than this in thy intercourse with the world, there is reason to fear that thou wilt succumb in the effort, or that thou mayst, in consequence of the overstraining of thy powers, fall into the opposite error, or perhaps become an eccentric personage, who distinguishes himself by great peculiarities, without therefore being at all a better man than many a true Christian, who does his duty modestly and makes no display of his virtues.

It is indeed a great mistake to suppose that the truly wise man or Christian is always serious, and that he avoids all social pleasures. The follower of Jesus can do his duty and approve himself to God in playful as well as in earnest mood—in the theatre as well as in the temple—at the banquet, amidst social mirth, as well as when attending to his business avocations—in a palace, surrounded by every luxury of life as well as in a hovel, in the midst of poverty and want. No occupation is sinful, no pleasure condemnable, except such as cannot be followed or enjoyed without injury to others, without infringement of their rights, or without damaging our own reputation and stimulating the bad and unworthy tendencies in us.

There are many noble Christians on this earth, full of godliness, but who shrink from displaying this before men by any affectation of peculiar sanctity, by the use of pious phraseology, or the adoption of particular demureness of manner. Indeed, the modesty

that belongs to the true Christian always leads him to conceal his own merits, and to place himself upon a level with others, not to endeavour to distinguish himself from them. By so doing, he wins the affection and confidence of the good, as well as of the less good, and thus opens up new means of usefulness for himself. Like St. Paul, he makes himself everything to all men, in order that he may win many souls. Like Jesus Christ, he associates with publicans and sinners, without ever losing sight of the sublime ends he holds in view.

And thus I learn to recognise the truth, O Saviour of my life, that Thou didst not demand impossibilities of us when Thou spakest, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," and when Thou saidst, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Yea, O Divine Purifier of my heart, I will follow Thee —follow Thee to God! I will deny myself, and conquer myself when I am tempted by the lusts of the flesh! I will *daily* put into execution the rules that I have laid down for the purpose of eradicating my most besetting sin, and thus eventually purge myself of all the weaknesses that cleave to me, however wearisome and painful the task may be.

I have now found the true way of drawing nearer to Thee, O my divine Teacher, and of becoming like unto Thee. I will strike my enemies one by one; I will conquer the worst and most dangerous of my faults first; the rest will then be the more easy to subdue. Then I shall be washed clean of all my sins

and imperfections by Thy blood, with which Thou didst attest the divine truth of Thy word. Then, O God and Father, most holy of Beings, I shall at last become worthy of the great end for which, in Thy loving omnipotence, Thou didst call me into being!

Father, my Father, I *will* it, and, supported by Thy strength and Thy grace, which are mighty in Thy children, I shall be able to accomplish what I will to do. I have often failed, for, though my intentions have been good, they have not always been formed with the prudence and wisdom that beseem a Christian, and I have in consequence lost courage, and been unfaithful to my resolutions. Endow me, O Father, with strength and insight! Enlighten me by Thy example, O Eternal Son! Sanctify me in everlasting truth, O Holy Ghost! Amen!

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

When all my dearest pleasures fail,
When all my brightest stars grow pale,
When blighted fortune prompts despair,
I still find happiness in prayer.

When friends prove false who seemed most true,
When evil tongues do pierce me through,
When in my feelings none can share,
I still find happiness in prayer.

Father! with folded hands, to Thee,
Imploringly I bend the knee;
Raised o'er the world, death, every care,
I stand before Thy throne in prayer.

(1 Thess. v. 17.)

To pray, in the fulness of our hearts, to God in His Infinite Wisdom, is to perform the most solemn and the most sublime act of life. This is not an earthly, but a heavenly occupation. We leave the realm of the transient and enter the kingdom of the spirit, our true home, and exercise the highest privilege vouchsafed to man, that of communion with the Most Holy, the Most High.

All mankind pray: not only the Christian, but also the poor savage on the banks of some unknown stream in a distant land, humbles himself before God. For though his supplication may be addressed to an idol of stone, or to the stars of heaven—his aspirations mount towards the Incomprehensible, towards the Highest Being, who rules the world and rules man and his destinies. The heart of the savage is truly devout, though his mind is steeped in darkness.

A human being, full of heartfelt devotion, prostrated in the dust, with hands, eyes and soul raised to God, presents a spectacle which even touches the heart of the base profligate and inspires him with respect. He is forced to confess: "this man is better and greater than I!"

All mankind pray.—And this inherent tendency in the human soul to return to the source of its being, is an attestation of its lofty descent and of its higher future.

The wisest of men pray, for in their hearts the yearning for reunion with God speaks more loudly even than in others. The old man prays, for to him God has revealed Himself more distinctly in the varied events of life. The king prays, for, in spite of all that venal tongues may say, which would not deign to flatter him did he not wear a crown, he feels that he is weak and powerless. In the midst of the borrowed splendour that surrounds the throne, his heart warns him that he is but dust, that he is a sinful creature, and that many of his subjects are more pious, better,

more pleasant in the sight of God than he. The buoyant youth prays, when, withdrawing from the noisy haunts of pleasure, he returns to solitude in the quiet of the night. Behind the sunny landscape that surrounds him, he beholds the storm-pregnant clouds of the future approaching, and he trembles at the insufficiency of his own strength. He holds fast by God; he knows no friend more faithful, no father who is kinder, no protector who is mightier. The rude warrior prays, when at night he lays him down to rest on his blood-stained weapons. He knows that it is not to these that he owes his safety, but to One stronger than they—he knows that he has to go forth again to his terrible work, and that in a few moments his bleeding corpse may be stretched beside many others on the field of battle. The mother, surrounded by her sweet children, prays. God bestowed upon her these joys of her life, and God may take them away; and the name of the Lord is blessed by her. The profligate, stretched on his bed of suffering, prays with tardy repentance. The hour-glass tells him that this life is not eternity, and in his mirror he catches a glimpse of the ghost of his former self. He now shudders with horror at the remembrance of his life so sinfully wasted, as formerly he smiled with scorn at the practices of true Christians. The sorrowing widow prays beside the coffin of her beloved husband: the world has become a desert to her; she has lost what she cherished most, but God remains to her, and also a blessed hope, which dies not in the grave. The

philanthropic sage prays, when, after some benevolent act, he sallies forth to draw new strength from the sight of nature in her beauty, and when, overwhelmed by the splendour of creation, he feels tears of emotion gathering in his eyes.

One only stands aside unmoved, with stony heart, looking with a supercilious smile of pity or of surprise at the world in prayer, and asking: "Why do they pray? If God is Omniscient, He knows what they want; if God is All-wise, He knows better than we do what is good for us; if God is All-good, He will not wait for our prayers, but will give us what we need, without our asking for it. Why then do they pray?"

Thus speaks the self-sufficient sceptic. But even many Christians, who would be sorry to be considered atheists, or to be failing in Christian faith, endeavour in like manner to justify to themselves their want of earnestness, their frequent neglect of all thoughts that lead to God, their aimless mode of life. They have strength enough to raise doubts in order to vindicate their ways to themselves; but they have not the courage, the capacity, or the will to see and to admit the worthlessness of these excuses.

Why shouldst thou pray?

Not for God's sake, for God needs not thy prayers, thy supplications, thy thanks; and though thou mayst neglect His service, though thou mayst sink so far below thine own true worth as to enjoy, like the animals, all the good gifts bestowed upon thee without one thought of the giver; though thou mayst forget

Him: He will not forget thee. For He is loving and merciful, and long-suffering.

Not for God's sake shouldst thou pray, not in order to tell Him what thou needest, what thou fearest, what thou wishest. Before He called thee into existence, He knew of what things thou wouldst have need; for He is omniscient. (Matt. vi. 8.)

Not for God's sake, not in order to teach Him what would be advantageous to thee, not in order to give counsel to Him—for He alone, before whom all the secrets of the past and of the future lie unveiled, knoweth what is good for us poor mortals under all circumstances and at all times: He is allwise.

Not either for the sake of other men shouldst thou pray, that they may account thee a good Christian, an upright citizen, a worthy father, an exemplary mother. If thou prayest in order to gain the good opinion of other men, without any thought of the importance, the dignity, and the solemnity of prayer, what art thou other than a blasphemous hypocrite, who tradest fraudulently with the most sacred act of religion, and who would fain make even God an instrument towards the attainment of his unworthy ends? The severe words which Jesus once pronounced in condemnation of the praying Pharisees, will then apply to thee.

Nor either shouldst thou pray from mere habit, because thou wert taught so to do when a child, because it has ever been thy custom to say a prayer at stated hours of the day, because thou wishest to keep up the rules of thy parents and forefathers, which

thou so grossly misunderstandest. The prayer of mere habit can have no value in the sight of God. Such prayer is no more than the emission of empty, soulless words, which pass from the lips into the air, and there are dissolved into vapour. Rather spare thyself the trouble of such useless prayer, which is not pleasing to God, and which dishonours thyself. Thou dost not venture to address to thy earthly superiors, or even to thy equals, words that have no meaning, to which thou givest no thought, and thou darest to approach in spirit the throne of the Almighty, babbling sentences learnt by rote, without giving any attention to what they contain? "When ye pray," saith Jesus, "use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, who think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Nay, only the prayer that is poured forth from the innermost depths of a truly devout heart, reaches to Heaven.

Why shouldst thou pray? For thine own sake alone, and in order that thou mayst experience in regard to thyself, the blessed and heavenly power of prayer.

Even the noblest of men, the most learned, the most enlightened, are but weak mortals, as long as their spirits are clad in the veil of dust. It is impossible for them to remain ever, or even for any length of time, in the exalted mood, to which their minds are occasionally attuned by their power of insight, and by sublime principles, free from all dross of earth. They ever sink back again into their lower state; they again seek support in human customs; it is a satisfaction to them

to feel like children—and indeed what is man, in reference to his Father in heaven, but a child?

Men need to turn their thoughts to God; it is a necessity of their nature to commune, and to occupy themselves with the Highest Being; they cannot be happy without feeling in their hearts confiding trust in the wise and kind Providence of an Infinite Father. And in like manner as they are wont to pour out their hearts to parents, friends, or protectors, although these may be well aware of all that they have to say, and would love them and protect and support them, though they spake no word—so also they address themselves to God with calm, believing, child-like hearts. They lift up their thoughts full of reverence to the Ruler of the universe; they breathe a gentle sigh towards the Fountain of all good. This is prayer.

The Omniscient knows the thought, knows the aspiration; for what is hidden to the All-perfect One, whose Spirit permeates the universe, and stirs the mote dancing in the beam of the remotest star?

But it is the very thought of His infinite greatness—a thought which is never more present to us than during prayer—that fills us with quickening confidence. Prayer then opens to us, as it were, the portals of the spirit-world, in which we also have some right of citizenship. We draw nearer to the Deity, and feel that we belong to Him. We rise on the wings of prayer, above all that is worthless and perishable, and become greater, yea, more divine, as we do so. The conviction becomes ever mightier within us that we can

never cease to exist. We distinguish more clearly between what is everlasting and what is perishable—between what is real and what is mere appearance. We see the whole universe in a new light. The globe on which we dwell becomes in our eyes a mere speck in the great immeasurable all of things. We descry, through the boundless distances of the starry heavens, a minute portion only of the great temple of the Holy of Holies, and we glow with rapture at the thought of having been made worthy, by the power of God, to be called inhabitants of this divine kingdom.

And happy presentiments thrill through us. Heavenly joy pervades all nature. This is the power of prayer; this is the effect of drawing nigh unto God. No one can commune with God without feeling his spirit sanctified and purified by the act.

When a child impresses a grateful kiss on the hand of father or mother, it expresses its noblest sentiments in human fashion. God created me, and assigned to me the lot of man: why should I endeavour to rise above the nature with which He has endowed me, and refuse to venerate Him in pure human fashion, with childlike mind? If, in His grace, He vouchsafe to me in future, a higher grade of perfection, oh, then I shall, as angel or seraph, as denizen of a higher world, know how to worship Him in nobler and more worthy manner. But I am a human being—I am in His eyes but a prattling babe; therefore, oh, ye scoffers, let me honour my Creator, my Heavenly Father, as a child does its father, and in the imperfect utterances of

humanity. He lends His ear even to these imperfect utterances, He understands the meaning even of the silent tears that escape from my eyes, while they are uplifted to Him. Does not a tender, loving, human mother understand the first smile of her babe?

When giving myself entirely up to God in prayer, I feel like a child resting on the loving bosom of his father. I dread no fate that can befall me, for I am with Him. I fear no enemies, for He loves me. I go through the world with fuller confidence. Such is the power of prayer.

And when I thus, with fervent piety, endeavour to draw nigh to the Holy of Holies, whom none dare approach who are not pure and sinless, every fault that I have committed, my precipitate actions, my passions, force themselves in between me and God. Alas! I would fain hold communion with Him, and I am not worthy to look up to Him. Sinner as I am, I lie sorrowful at the feet of the Almighty, suing for mercy. Solemn, fervent promises of a better life in future are offered up by me. They inspire me with new strength, new courage, renewed cheerfulness. The all-good God bears no resentment. How could a human passion, such as that which we call resentment, dwell in the mind of the All-perfect? Nay, my punishment comes from my own sins; it is I who feel resentment against myself; it is I who deplore that I have been growing in sinfulness, that I have been departing further from God. I strive to regain what I have lost. My Saviour has taught me that the

All-merciful will not reject the repentant sinner. And God hears my promises, and the Omniscient is witness that I earnestly strive to fulfil them by conquering my faults. Full of love towards Him, I am full of love towards my fellow-men. The prayer has purified and sanctified me. Through it, I have become a better, a more virtuous being than I was before. Such is the power of prayer.

He who lives at enmity with the members of his household, with relatives or acquaintances—he who takes malicious pleasure in disclosing the faults of his fellow-men, and who enviously depreciates their merits—he who deals in lies instead of truth, in dishonesty instead of honesty, in persecution instead of kindness, in deception instead of noble uprightness—he cannot pray! To pray is to be with God; and he who is with God cannot persevere in sin.

Thou prayest, O Christian, and pourest forth supplications. Yet what thou askest is not always granted. But sooner or later thou wilt learn to see how injurious it would have been for thee, had thy wishes been fulfilled. God is kinder to us than we are to ourselves, because He is wiser.

But should we therefore cease to lay our supplications before the Lord? Ought we to renounce and desist from our child-like submission of our wishes to our Heavenly Father? Nay, let not such thoughts disturb the holy relations between thee and God. "Ask and it shall be given to thee; knock and the door shall be opened unto thee."

Thou believest in a divine Providence, which from eternity hath ordered thy destiny. Has not then He whose Providence thus rules, been cognizant of all that thou wouldst do, and of all that thou wouldst leave undone; has He not known from all eternity what would be thy wants, thy prayers, and the moods of thy mind? Yea, He did hear thy prayers before thou wert born. Yet thou prayest, and he who prays wisely knows the blessing of prayer.

Recall to mind the hours in which thou hast stood before God with trembling heart, crying: Save me, O merciful Father! Recall to mind the times when all thy prospects have been obscured, and when on the brink of despair thou hast turned in faith to the only God, crying: The darkness will not be dispelled except Thou sheddest light upon my future! And lo! circumstances to which thou didst never look forward, events apparently the most insignificant, things which men call accidental, have saved thee and improved thy condition. Thou hast regained thy happiness and thy cheerfulness. But, in the order of the divine creation, there is no such thing as chance or accident. There is a God of infinite power and mercy. Thou hast felt His presence. Such is the power of prayer.

I have felt Thy presence, O God and Father, when my soul has been most cast down! I have felt Thy presence when the whole world around me has seemed dead as the barren desert. I have felt Thy presence when no other friend was left to me. I have felt Thy presence when I have been tottering on the threshold of

death. Thou wert ever there, Thou didst ever remain. Thou didst succour me, Thou didst overwhelm me with Thy mercies, and didst change with Almighty hand the circumstances that surrounded me, and which seemed as if they could never be changed.

Therefore, as long as I breathe, I will hold fast by Thee; I will cry to Thee, "Father, Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Therefore will I ever cling to Thee with childlike trust. Thou listenest to my stammering voice, Thou understandest the meaning of my tears, Thou knowest the secret of my sighs.

In Thee, through Thee, with Thee alone, can I be happy. Without Thee, my existence would be nought, and it would be better for me had I never been born. Wherever Thou art, there is Heaven, there is bliss. I can never be unhappy save when I stray from Thee. Amen.

LOVE AND FEAR OF GOD.

I love Thee, Lord! Thou art my choice,
In Thee my soul shall still rejoice,
　　My heritage, my part!
Thee will I more than all things love,
Obey Thee, joy all joys above!
Nor e'er let sin my sorrow prove;
　　Thou, Lord, my Saviour art!

My silent hours how deeply blest!
In Thee my soul has found its rest,
　　And heavenly pleasure known.
Oh bliss! to raise our souls to Thee,
Thy life to live, Thy face to see,
Who, guiding us so tenderly,
　　A Father's love hast shown.

(1 JOHN iv. 16—21.)

HOWEVER important may be the relations in which a human being stands here on earth to the various companions of his life; however much these relations may lay hold upon his feelings and occupy his mind; be it as superior or inferior, as son, daughter, or head of a family; as enterprising youth, to whom the world

seems still full of hope and promise, or as a hoary-headed man, surrounded by all the reverence his virtues merit: there is one relation in which every mortal stands, which is more important, more attractive, more unalterable, and more indestructible than any of these, and that is his relation to the Deity.

Parents and relatives may die, but God ever remains with him. Friends change their minds, forget their most touching promises, prefer other hearts to ours—God ever remains faithful to us! The freshness and attraction of youthful beauty and grace are lost in a few years; men's admiring smiles become fewer—but God remains ever the same! War, fire, or rebellion may destroy my property; my inferiors may cease to obey me; old adherents may leave me to attach themselves to another; I am deserted, all my relations to my fellow men are changed—but my relation to God can undergo no shadow of change!

Yet how different is the relation in which each one of the countless number of human beings who look up to God, places himself to the Deity! Perhaps there are no two mortals whose relation to their heavenly Ruler is exactly the same.

The conception we form of the Deity varies according to our position in life, to our experience and our knowledge. And our conception of Him regulates the relation in which we place ourselves to Him. There are, for instance, barbarous nations, whose ideas of a Godhead are so imperfect, that they imagine themselves to be, not indeed more mighty, but in

many respects cleverer than the Divinity, and who in consequence blame their gods for certain acts, and even scold them and laugh at them. These poor ignorants are as much to be pitied as many Christians, who are equally discontented, and who grumble when God refuses to hear their prayers and to fulfil their foolish wishes. There are other people, again, whose notions of the Highest Being are so contemptible, that they do not fear to pray to Him for assistance in their most infamous undertakings, in murder and robbery, in deception and seduction, or for the attainment of the most frivolous objects, or for the satisfaction of their revengeful feelings. And, alas; that I should have to say so, it is not only among the heathens that this desecration of the Majesty of the Almighty is met with! Even Christians, even the so-called enlightened nations of Europe, at times express the hope that God will lend them His assistance to satisfy their ambition or their malice, or will become the instrument of human revenge! Indeed nations frequently, by command of their rulers, pray to God the one for the destruction of the other!

Is this a worthy relation for man to place himself in to God? Is it the right relation? How contemptible are your experiences, how pitiable your conceptions! If the beasts of prey in the wilderness could form an idea of the Deity, it would be such as yours, and their prayers also would be such as yours. Strength, booty, subjection, victory, such would be their burden!

The conceptions of the Highest Being formed by men, are also in a great measure dependent on the differences in their temperaments.

Men who are by nature prone to gentle, compassionate and cheerful sentiments, think of God as the all-merciful, loving, long-suffering Father, who never can or will punish with inexorable severity. On the other hand, minds of a dark and passionate character, easily roused to anger, form a conception of the Deity as a strong and jealous God, as an angry, threatening, relentless judge, who punishes the sins of the fathers on the children in the third and fourth generation. Minds inclined to melancholy recognize in the Creator of Spirits an earnest educator, who tries them in all kinds of suffering, before He admits them to be participators in His bliss; who allows them to found no hope on their own worth or merits, but sends them salvation exclusively through the blood of the Lamb, who was sacrificed for the sins of the world. The proud and the arrogant conceive of God as the most exalted Being, as the king of the world, who cannot be approached, except through the intercession of Jesus —or other persons held by mortals to be saintly—or conceive of Him as being so far exalted above all creation, that He takes no heed of the fate, the hopes, the sufferings or prayers of individual men.

So divers are the conceptions which men form of the Deity. Therefore one man, when he prays, looks upon himself as standing in the same relation to God, as that in which a thoughtless and ignorant child stands

to his father; another trembles before the All-just and All-mighty, like a timid slave. Another, overwhelmed by constant self-contempt and utter hopelessness, strives only to secure to himself the mercy of Jesus and the imputation of His merits, imagining that whatever good man may possess in himself is all vain, and is held as nought by God; another strives to fulfil with anxious zeal every minute ordinance which he believes to emanate from the Deity, as though man depended on his own merits exclusively and had nothing to hope from the mercy of the Heavenly Father; a third is more indifferent, because he believes it to be incompatible with the infinite majesty of God, and therefore improbable, that the Deity should take account of every individual, and of each of his actions, feelings and thoughts, but that whoever has been elected for salvation will be saved; that all things are subject to the great law of eternal necessity.

What is then the real, true relation in which I stand to my Creator, or in which I ought to stand to Him? This I cannot learn from the lips of any mortal, but it is taught with certainty by divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures. It is taught to me by Jesus and His disciples.

And they teach me to look up to the Highest Spirit, the Creator of the universe, with childlike faith and trust. "Have faith in God," cries Jesus. (Mark xi. 22.) He taught us to call God our Father. (Matt. vi. 8, 9.) He promises us in the name of God,

the Rewarder of all, that our trespasses will be forgiven, if we forgive those who have trespassed against us. (Mark xi. 25.) He saith: "And thou shalt love thé Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment! And the second is like, namely this: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." (Mark xii. 30, 31.) This is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. (Mark xii. 33.) And he who believes this and can do this—only he, so saith Christ Himself, is not far from the kingdom of God. (Mark xii. 34.)

Thus we are taught by Jesus the Messiah. Therefore all else which is taught and preached, and which differs from these divine words, from the sense of this divine revelation, is but human dogmatizing and error, empty casuistry, or senseless fanaticism. Even though in the numerous cases wherein particular passages in the Old Testament seem to contradict the words of Jesus, we have to attend to the sayings of the divine Son, not to the sayings of the pious men and prophets, who lived hundreds of years before the appearance of Jesus, and who could not rejoice in the light which we have attained through Him. Does not the exalted Enlightener of the world Himself say: "I have not come to destroy but to fulfil," to perfect, and to reveal the will of God in its fulness? And He did so. And in what a sublime spirit! How much more perfectly than all the prophets of the Old Testament! See how

He teaches it in the Gospel of St. Matthew, v. 20—48, in words which every follower of the Saviour ought to imprint on his or her heart and memory.

This also is the spirit in which the Apostles of the Lord, and more especially John, the favourite of Jesus, taught: "God is love:" says St. John! (1 Ep. iv. 16—18) "and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. There is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear has torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us."

The Holy Scriptures do indeed also exhort us to be God-fearing, but this does not mean that we should be afraid of God, or that we should tremble at His wrath, (only the sinner has to fear this, not the true Christian who lives and acts with and in God) but that we should hold sacred all things which bear upon our religion, that is to say the doctrines, opinions and customs connected with our worship of God. The fear of God is the pious, holy dread of desecrating aught that has been consecrated to God and to His worship. But those who truly love God cannot be devoid of reverence for Him and for all things that are consecrated to Him. Can a child love his father tenderly and yet not feel respect and affection for all that in any way belongs to his father, or for that which the love of others has dedicated to his father, or for all that emanates from him?

In this sense fear of God may be combined with the most ardent love of God, without the latter being in any way mixed up with terror, anguish, or apprehension. Fear of God is the fruit of deep-felt love of God.

Very few persons stand in this relation of guileless, trusting, childlike love to our Father in Heaven. In vain do Jesus and His holy messengers exhort us to this love. Nevertheless fear predominates in most hearts. Most men pray to the Father not so much from love, or from an impulse of the heart to disburden itself of its infinite debt of gratitude towards the Giver of all-good, but because they dread His judgments, because they tremble at the thought of the day of retribution, or because they feel themselves in danger of destruction and know no other help or refuge than the Almighty.

How, then, am I to re-establish my relation to God, so that it may be in harmony with what Jesus teaches? How can I attain to true, pure, simple, childlike, trusting love to God?

To love God, we must know Him. For how canst thou love even a human being, of whom thou knowest little or nothing? Thy reverence, thy love, thy heartfelt worship of Him, who is alone worthy of worship, will increase in exact proportion to thy extended knowledge of His greatness, His holiness, and His mercy.

However, thou canst not learn to know Him by merely learning to repeat by rote biblical phrases or other words that speak generally of the Divine attributes.

Thou must go forth thyself, and
His creation, which bears witness to His marvellous wisdom; in His guidance of the world and of the destinies of the nations that inhabit it; in the loving care of all which He is constantly manifesting, yea, even daily in the events of thine own life.

And if thou findest that thy mind and heart, oppressed by the burdens of the day, are not always capable of devoting themselves to this sublime occupation, then seek recreation and instruction in reading the books of wise and experienced men on the works of God in nature. By the instruction which thou wilt derive from these the eyes of thy spirit will be opened, and thou wilt discern more clearly. Or visit the temple of the Lord with true devotion and a sincere desire for edification, and listen to the exposition and application of divine truths, which thou hast an opportunity of hearing there every Sunday. Neglect no occasion that may present itself of enlightening thy understanding, and thereby increasing thy knowledge of God. The more clearly thou discernest the Father of all, the more sublime and majestic will He appear to thee, the more inscrutable in His wisdom, the more holy in His guidance of man, the more inexhaustible in His mercy and grace. Man, shouldst thou never before have been able to pray to God from the depths of thy heart, except in the midst of sorrow and tribulation, thou wilt, when thou knowest God, learn to pray from love, and with sweet tears of joy; and the more

thy love develops itself, the deeper will be thy knowledge of God.

Yes, we must love God in order to know Him, in as far as poor mortals, born in the dust of this earth, can learn to know the infinite and most exalted Being whose greatness and perfection far surpass our powers of comprehension. Even men can only be truly known to us when we love them, and we never learn thoroughly to understand those who are indifferent to us. For when we love we give redoubled attention to all that the beloved object says and does; we take far more pains to penetrate into his thoughts, and to understand his views, and we endeavour to draw conclusions as to his meaning and his wishes, from trifling observations and matters which we should hardly notice in others. The same is the case with the soul, in regard to its heavenly Maker.

This true relation of man to God, that is to say, the soul's love of God, cannot indeed be manifested in the same way as man's love and friendship for man. And when attempts are erroneously made thus to express it, the result is either a barren play with earthly feelings, or mere dead and outward practices.

The true love of the soul for God does not express itself in sentimental enthusiasm, in newly invented sweet and flattering names applied to God, in constant yearning for Him, and in a perpetual dwelling of the spirit on the glory of the Holy of Holies. Such a state of mind is not natural to man, and cannot, there-

fore, be long sustained. Persons who, by some strange perversion of mind, are led to believe that love of God manifests itself in this way, generally end by falling into a state of dejection, in which they torment themselves with reproaches for not always having their thoughts rivetted on God, but having, on the contrary, given some of their attention to the things of this world also. They torment themselves without reason, because they are attempting to make the impossible possible. At last, discontent with themselves drives them either into apathy or frivolity, or into self-destructive and barren fanaticism.

True love and fear of God do not either manifest themselves in fervent and frequent prayers, in anxious observation of all Church rules, by an outward look of demureness, by an assumption of sanctity that degenerates into bigotry, and holds light all the joys of life, or by a puritanical contempt of the world, which but too often borders on hypocrisy. Verily, the love which God expects from us is not to be evinced in a constant repetition of the exclamation, "Lord, Lord!" or, "Abba! dear Father!" The love which the Creator demands of His children is not that we should disdain the pleasures of life which He bestows upon us with such bountiful hand, but that we should do the will of our Father who is in Heaven.

The will of the Eternal Father is that we should have confidence in Him, confidence in His providence, in His clemency and fatherly kindness—confidence that

even our bitterest sufferings come from Him, and are for the good of our souls.

Not with the earthly feelings, with which we love our fellow-men, can we love the infinite God in His greatness, but only with deep reverence and trusting submission to His will.

The love of our soul for God is, however, most clearly revealed in endeavours to become like unto Him, and to assimilate itself to His love for us, that is to say, in endeavours to look upon all men as our brothers, to love them as such, and to contribute to their contentment, their well-being, and their peace, as much as in us lies.

For "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also."

Here, then, we have the secret revealed to us as to wherein consists the true love of man to God, and as to how it is to manifest itself. This is the relation in which my soul, while here on earth, is to stand to its Maker. Ah, how often have I not misunderstood this love—how often forgotten it! Woe is me, for the love of God has not always dwelt in me, and I have been afraid of God; but so long as I dwelt in fear, I dwelt not in God.

How often have I not deluded myself when I have looked upon myself as a child of God, and yet har-

boured in my heart envy towards those who were considered better than I; when I repelled with proud unforgivingness a fellow-man, who had perhaps wounded my feelings by some act which was, after all, but the consequence of my own conduct! How often has my heart ventured to pray to God, while filled with hatred to His creatures! Can we believe that a child who does not long to be like his excellent father, really sincerely loves that Father?

Forgive, oh, forgive me, Father in heaven! I will turn to Thee again with new and true love. I will re-establish the blessed relation of my soul to Thee, which Jesus Christ has taught me is the right one. Yes, O Heavenly Father, I will love Thee, not in words, but in deeds; for not in words, but in works, hath Thy love for us all been most gloriously manifested.

O my fellow-men, relatives, fellow-citizens, friends, acquaintances, all who meet me on my pilgrimage through life, I will love God the Father in you His children; I will love the Creator in His creatures. I will cease to hate you. Calm peace takes possession of my heart. And should you misjudge me and hate me (alas, your doing so is but a natural consequence and punishment of my many faults and errors), should you even persecute me, be it so. But I will acknowledge no foe upon earth; I will not hate you. I will seek to protect myself against your anger, for God bids me do this. But while thus protecting myself, I will sue anew for your friendship and esteem.

You will not deny it to me when you learn to know how full of love to each of you is my heart, and how willingly I would assist all with deed and counsel, as far as my limited means will allow.

Oh my God and Father, keep me in love of Thee! Let me never waver therein! Let me dwell in Thee now and for ever! Amen!

RELIGIOUS DEVOTION.

When in some solemn silent hour,
  I stand before my Maker's face,
And urged by deep devotion's power,
  In prayer I seek the throne of grace,
What joy, what heavenly peace I feel,
Sent from Thy presence, o'er me steal.

How trifling seems each transient pleasure
  Of earth, with all its pomp and show;
Which men still covet as their treasure,
  And to their idol, slave-like, bow.
What bliss so pure—what joy so fair,
As to be one with God in prayer?

Then on devotion's wing I'll soar,
  Till unto Thee, my God, I rise;
Creation's wondrous work explore,
  And understand Thy mysteries—
To praise and worship Thee aright,
Uplifts man to the angels' height.

(MATT. xv. 8.)

THE Pharisees and Interpreters of the Mosaic Law in Jerusalem gathered one day around the Messiah, and importuned Him with questions meant to be embarrassing to Him and to His disciples. For the latter, as well as their divine Guide, at times neglected many

little observances, which the laws of Moses enjoin on various occasions, as for instance the washing of hands before touching bread that was to be eaten.

Christ addressed them with the convincing power which His words ever possessed. He made it clear to them that they did indeed observe with admirable strictness even the smallest outward act of the law, that they performed every sacrifice and every purification, and pronounced every prayer, yet that they were without religion, and far from the spirit of the Mosaic doctrine. He convinced them of this by unanswerable examples, and He added, that they were without religion, because they were without devotion. "Ye hypocrites!" He cried, "well did Esaias prophecy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me." (Matt. xv. 7, 8.)

Religion is the sacred relation in which man stands to God. But a mere recognition of this relation does not constitute religion, nor either does the mere observance of certain outward signs of reverence for the Highest Being constitute religion; but, God being a Spirit, the reverence for the All-Holy must penetrate the spirit of man, and in his meditations, in his prayers, and when he is performing acts of piety, he must rise above all that is earthly to the Spirit of spirits. This uplifting of the spirit to God, this merging, as it were, of the spirit in God, is devotion. Without this devotion it is impossible to be truly religious, and all

religion, all belief, all knowledge, all worship, all prayer, all good acts are in vain, and merely a dead show.

Jesus knew the human heart in its depths and in its weaknesses. Therefore the words which He spake nearly two thousand years ago, are strikingly true even at this time; and what He preached in the land of Genezareth is as fully recognized as truth, as if what He said had been addressed to us here in our country on this very day. Observe the greater number of Christians of the present time! Listen to the interpreters of the Bible in the pulpits, how accurately they know the words of the Scriptures, how cleverly they expound the whole series of human duties, or the secrets of faith. But observe their inward life, and their outward activity. They consider that all is done when they have gone through the service and preached their sermon, as though what they are and what they do, were only a matter of official duty. They have the knowledge but not the spirit of religion. Listen to the people, how regularly they say grace before meals, how regularly they pray, morning and evening, in their homes and in church, beside the graves of the dead, as at all established times of edification. Observe how regularly they repair to the temple of God, and take their seats therein; but even there attending to precedence of rank, not entering like children the house of their father with a feeling of the equality of all, but forgetting that before God there is no distinction of persons! Observe

how zealously they throng to communion, to mass, to baptism, to the sermon; how they cast down their eyes and fold their hands; how strictly they observe the fasts at home, or read a chapter in the Bible! But if you could penetrate into their innermost hearts, into their lives at home and in their various vocations, into the manœuvres of their selfishness or their vanity, what would you behold! They have fulfilled all the outward observances of the law, of human ordinances and institutions, but the divine commandments they have not fulfilled. They have the husk, but the kernel is dead; they have the letter, but not the spirit. Whatever they be, and whatever they do, they have no devotion. Therefore though they be religious, they are not godly. It is this people of which the Messiah spake, "They draw nigh unto Me with their mouths, and they honour Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me!"

It is true, many Christians have felt this, and have longed for a better state of things, and have therefore separated themselves from the great mass, and formed new congregations, and new sects within the Christian church. But they have in the greater number of cases only fallen into opposite faults. Their virtues, their works of true godliness they did not increase, but only their hours of prayer; the number of their devotional exercises was augmented, but not their devotion. Christ and His disciples did not separate themselves from the other worshippers of God whether they were better or worse, but prayed with

the rest of the Jews in the temple and in the synagogue. It matters little in whose company we pray, or with what outward demonstrations, it is the spirit in which we pray that is important. Many prayers, with all the outward appearances of devotion; having the name of God ever on the lips; abstaining from all innocent pleasures out of reverence for the Omnipresent; the observance of outward strictness and demureness, while the heart is full of envy, or anger, or is moved by other evil passions—this is not devotion, but sanctimoniousness. Not the weapons and the war-song, but courage makes the true warrior. "Not all they who say Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven." So spake Jesus.

Still less in the spirit of Jesus Christ is the system of penances, which drives men away from their fellow men, in order that they may devote themselves entirely to God; which makes them dwell in deserts and solitary cells; which leads them to neglect those duties to human society which the Son of God so earnestly enjoined; which induces them to destroy by fearful castigations their bodies, which the divine Word teaches them they ought to look upon as a sanctuary and temple of God; to enfeeble by fastings, by physical suffering, and by privations of all kinds, those mental and bodily powers, which the Heavenly Father bestowed upon them as the talent which they are to turn to the best account for the benefit of mankind—as the light which they are not to put under a bushel. This is not religiosity or godliness, but the

destruction thereof, for it is in opposition to the will of God. It is not devotion, but fanaticism, not a living in the Lord, but self-destruction arising out of a most unhallowed misunderstanding of the words of Christ. They seized the letter of the word, and held fast by that, and thus lost the spirit. And the letter killeth, the spirit alone quickeneth.

What then is devotion? The very term explains itself. It is a devoting of ourselves to that which we are doing; a fixing of the entire attention of the mind on the occupation we are engaged in. In this general sense of the term, everything which we do with the whole power of our mind, is performed with devotion.

The more important a thing is to us, the more strongly it rivets our attention. Now what can be more important to us than our true happiness, the position we hold in the universe, our relation to eternity? What is there in the universe, and in all eternity, more exalted than God? Therefore religiosity is impossible without devotion. Therefore devotion is the freeing of the spirit from all distracting circumstances, from all earthly trammels, and the uplifting of it to divine things! As soon as these latter really become our object, they spontaneously sway our whole inward being. Therefore devotion is that solemn mood of the mind, in which all worldly thoughts are forgotten. The highest degree of devotion is that silent rapture of the heart, which shone in the face of Jesus when at prayer, or in the face of Stephen when,

filled with the Holy Ghost, he looked up to Heaven and beheld the Lord in His glory, while the people were stoning him. (Acts vii. 55—59.)

This devotion, as the experience of every man will tell him, cannot be produced by artificial means. You may appoint hours of prayer; you may let the beads of the rosary pass through your fingers; you may fold your hands and uplift your eyes, or fall upon your knees or upon your faces: you may veil your face in prayer, or uncover your heads—but these postures will produce no devotion, though they may be a means of reminding you that you ought to feel devout, and may be an outward sign of the inward devotion, and as such fitted to keep off distracting thoughts. Devotion must work from within outward, from without you cannot force it into inward existence.

Such outward observances as those just alluded to, though they cannot generate true devotion or take the place of it, are not, however, in themselves reprehensible, but, on the contrary, are much to be commended. They remind all present, particularly in large assemblies, that the people have come together to worship God; they prevent, by their uniformity, all such little matters as are more likely to distract the attention where many persons are gathered together than when we are in solitude. Indeed, as according to our nature everything that impresses our outward senses produces a great effect on our inward moods, it is not improbable that these outward observances, though they

cannot awaken devotion may nevertheless prepare the heart and make it receptive for it.

If it be undeniable that true devotion cannot be artificially produced from without, it is still more certain that it cannot be forced or awakened by command. Therefore to say to any one, "Be devout," when his heart is either incapable of, or disinclined to, this sublime mood, is foolish and vain. The complaint of many preachers as to the want of devotion in their hearers, is most frequently the self-condemnation of the complaining teacher. For the complaint proves that they are themselves failing either in zeal and diligence, or in the power, so essential in their vocation, of rousing and rivetting the attention of the congregation by the vivacity, lucidity, dignity, and general attractiveness of their sermons, and of lifting up the minds of their hearers to the level of their subject.

Devotion is a free utterance and action of the heart, as are love and esteem. It can as little be called forth on command as love. You may command your children to be quiet, to fold their hands and look down, and to repeat prayers learnt by rote; but what they feel, what occupies their thoughts at that moment, you cannot know, and you have no control over it. To awaken true devotion a very different kind of preparation is required.

For this reason, the blind, though well-meant zeal of certain rulers who used to force their subjects to go to church, to take the sacrament regularly, to go to con-

fession, and to fulfil other religious observances, under penalty of punishment, was certainly a great mistake. Such ordinances do not promote religion or godliness, but, on the contrary, hypocrisy, which is an abomination in the sight of the Lord. Forced service can never be a service of love. It is not empty words, or outward appearances of devotion that the Lord demands. The people who are content with these are the people of whom He saith, "It draweth nigh to Me with its mouth, and honoureth Me with its lips, but its heart is far from Me."

No; devotion can neither be forced nor artificially fostered; it must arise spontaneously in the heart; and it does arise spontaneously when the heart is full of natural reverence and deep love for the Most High. In like manner, an inferior listens with reverential attention to a superior whom he truly respects; in like manner, the subject looks up with deference to his prince, who, he knows, has the power to elevate him or to prostrate him in the dust; in like manner, a child speaks with tenderness to its mother, because it clings to her with love and gratitude. Learn, then, to know the majesty of the Almighty God in His works; learn to trace His wisdom, His providence, His mercy, in the events of thine own life; realize to thyself His infinite power and His infinite love; picture Him to thyself as the Exalted One, in comparison with whom all the suns of the heavens are but as atoms of dust, and the mightiest of the earth, clad in purple and gold, are but as poor creeping worms—as the Ruler of thy des-

tiny, the Lord of life and of death, the Judge of the dead, the Eternal God—and a feeling of reverential awe will thrill through thee, and the world of sense, with all its mere appearances, will vanish like a shadow. Thy spirit, awe-struck, yet full of courage, will lift itself up to the Creator, and anxiously, yet full of hope and love, thy soul will yearn towards the Father of souls, and thou wilt feel true devotion.

Many persons having never felt true devotion, hardly know what it is!—others have known it only in some great crisis of their life, when fear and anguish have oppressed their hearts, and they could find no help, no refuge except in the Almighty! Others again on their deathbed pray for the first time with true devotion, when offering up the prayer which proves to be their last; others when the thunders of the Lord of storms roll above the earth, and the forked lightning rends the heavens in twain; others when they stand with bleeding hearts by the bedside of a dying father or mother, husband or wife, a beloved child or valued friend, and seek in vain to stay the fleeting life. On such occasions even the most frivolous minds realize to themselves the greatness, the power and the love of the Infinite God, and the nothingness of human things, and this is devotion.

Oh parents, educators, public teachers and expounders of the Gospel, teach the youth of the land, and teach also the men and women to acknowledge the exalted attributes of the most High, the perfection, power, and mercifulness of the All-Perfect One, and

they will not lack reverence, and feelings of true devotion will arise spontaneously in their souls. Do not teach children first to repeat by rote prayers, which in most cases they cannot understand, and then afterwards speak to them of the attributes of the Heavenly Father; but first inspire both the young and the aged with reverence for the God of infinite glory and love, for the God of infinite goodness, and they will then begin to pray of themselves, without having learnt prayers by heart. And ye, O rulers and magistrates, improve the schools for the poor; improve public worship, by taking care that the clergy, the religious teachers of the people, be men of dignified character, of spotless conduct, of well-stored minds, and full of zeal: and religiosity will then bloom forth spontaneously among the people. Then there will be no want of true devotion either in the public or the private prayers of the people, nor when they contemplate nature, nor in the emotions called forth by the spectacle of human events. For affectionate and reverential uplifting of our souls to God does not only take place in those communions with Him which we term prayer, but whenever an event in our lives or the performance of a duty points to God. Thus I may feel devotion while studying the marvels of creation, or hearing them described. So likewise the contemplation of my duties, and the examination of my own virtues and defects, and every new extension of my knowledge may fill me with feelings of devotion.

Thus the emotion with which I witness the sufferings or the happiness of good men, the punishment which vice inflicts on itself, and the sweet rewards which virtue prepares for itself, may be akin to devotion. In like manner the perusal of pious works or the hearing of some religious discourse may raise the mind up into that higher mood. I may also feel truly devout while giving alms, or when performing my daily duties, be it in my household or in my office. Jesus has taught me to love God devoutly, that is to say with all my heart, and all my soul, and all my strength. For devotion excludes everything that is alien to its principal object.

But for this very reason men cannot cultivate devotion, as it is called, at all hours of the day; for the common avocations of public and domestic life have also a claim upon our attention. There are many things which we have to do for the preservation of our health, for the promotion of our domestic happiness, as also for the improvement of our business and of our minds, which cannot be attended to when our thoughts are distracted. It would be foolish to demand that the soul should at those moments be in a state of exaltation, and it is hypocritical to assume, while attending to such matters, a canting tone, and a sanctified and solemn demureness of manner. Everything must have its time; and to do each thing in its right time, and the right at all times, is the fundamental principle of Christianity. Rejoice with the happy, weep with the sorrowful! He who attempts

to be all things at all times, is sure of doing all things by half only.

But if thou desirest to occupy thyself at some fixed hour of the day with sacred matters, then let it be with that earnestness which is due to the most important of our concerns on earth, and the wonderful effect of this devotion on thy heart, the influence of that one solemn hour, or be it only minute, will not fail to make itself felt through all the other hours of worldly bustle. Just as in spring a gentle morning shower, or as in summer the morning dew, refreshes nature for the whole of the rest of the day, so an hour of devotion strengthens the heart of man for a long series of events, resolutions, and actions. Be what follows either joyful, or sorrowful, or terrible—the mind will ever maintain a lofty superiority over it. Nay, this elevated mood produced, will even make itself felt in the insignificant conversation with friends, and in the midst of sport and merriment. Devout occupation of the mind with divine things, is an uplifting of it to the Most High. All earthly matters are then excluded, all low passions are silent. He who holds frequent communion with God, becomes thereby a more exalted and divine man. The sight of all that is defective and unjust will cause him uneasiness. The lofty mood will in a measure become habitual and prevalent in him. It will diffuse a holiness through his mind, which will ennoble all his thoughts, feelings, and utterances. Whatever he observes, says, or desires, will be tinged with charity, gen-

tleness and kindness, will bear the impress of a noble spirit. For who can present himself before God in prayer or holy meditation, and then descend as it were from the foot of the throne of the Almighty, and give himself up to unworthy feelings or actions?

To the Christian, therefore, the whole of life in a certain measure becomes one great act of devotion. Such was thy life, O Jesus Christ, divine Man, Saviour of the world. Thy entire activity among the children of this earth was a holy uplifting of the purest of souls; Thy thought of the Father of Spirits was a constant holy rapture—for who has known the Father as Thou didst? Thy prayers were a true merging of Thy spirit in God's.

O my God, Lord of the universe, Invisible and Majestic Being, who compriseth in Thyself all things, and who art still my Father—to draw nearer to Thee, to learn to know Thee ever better through the teachings of Jesus, and through the glorious marvels of Thy wondrous Creation, and to grow ever holier through means of my extended knowledge—to grow more divine by unity of Spirit with Thee, O my God—such is the yearning and striving of my soul, such is the object of my life—and to this I must ever remain faithful. How could I be otherwise? The spectacle of Thy greatness fills the heavens and the earth with wonder and reverence, the contemplation of thy love fills the infinite worlds with rapture. Seraphim and cherubim kneel praying before Thee, and in devout prayer mortals come nearer to the

angels and their acts. O, that I could belong to those holy hosts, that I could glorify Thee worthily here on earth already. But may I not do so? Yea, Thou hast given me the grace and the power so to do, though hereafter, when I am nearer to Thee, when I myself have grown worthier, I shall do it more worthily still. Amen!

CHRISTIAN FAITH.

Strengthen, for it oft will falter,
My belief, oh God! in Thee;
Joyfully before Thine altar,
Then shall rise my thanks to Thee.
Let me not of Thee despair,
Wearying Thy throne with prayer;
Sinks my faith, oh Fount of light!
Make it glow more clear and bright.

Should bewildering doubts awaken,
Error tempt with dazzling glow:
Thy disciple, true, unshaken,
I will strive myself to show.
Let Thy ray again beam on me,
Shower down Thy faith upon me;
In unclouded light divine,
Make the truth's pure splendour shine.

To Thy word, and not the learning
Of man's wisdom let me seek,
There Thy goodness, Lord, discerning,
Let Thy voice within me speak.
More than all beneath the skies
Let me still Thy witness prize;
All my future life be shown,
Guided by Thy truth alone.

(John xii. 44-46.)

Were I a stranger, coming from some distant, solitary island in the ocean, whither the name or the

doctrines of Jesus had never penetrated, and were I suddenly to be introduced among the nations of the world, and to witness their different modes of worshipping the Deity, and to become acquainted with their various religious beliefs; and I felt within me the same deep yearning after the true faith, which as a child I used to feel after the Unknown, when I gazed at the wonders of nature, such as the starry heavens, or the majestic thunder clouds which passed over the shuddering earth; which faith should I embrace as the only true one? Should I bow down with the heathen before their idols, or kneel with the Christians in their temples? Should I honour with the Jews the strong and jealous Jehovah and the laws of Moses, with all their rules of outward discipline, or should I with the followers of Mahomet hate and persecute with the sword, all nations who do not accept the tenets of their prophet?

Whereby should I recognise the truth and divinity of the right faith? For though the Christians boast of having a divine revelation, the Jews also believe that Moses received their laws on Mount Sinai, direct from the hand of God; and Mahomet likewise, when preaching in the deserts of Arabia, announced his doctrine as coming from God; whilst the heathens maintained that divine beings had come down on earth to man, in order to instruct him in heavenly things.

Whereby then shall I recognise the correctness of these assertions, as each one thinks that he alone has

the true religion, and none will fall away from his belief; as heathens and Turks defend their faith with the sword; as the Jews have preferred to endure every suffering heaped upon them by other nations, rather than give up the laws of Moses, and thousands of Christians have died as martyrs to the strength of their convictions?

I should say, that THAT FAITH ONLY CAN BE TRULY DIVINE, WHICH MAKES MEN MORE GODLIKE, WHICH ELEVATES THEM ABOVE THE THINGS OF THE EARTH, ABOVE THEIR OWN FATE, AND ABOVE THE TERRORS OF DEATH, and which proves thereby that man's free and independent spirit is of nobler nature than the soul of the animals, which knows no higher object than the satisfaction of physical wants. For a faith that comes from God, must have the power of making us like unto God, of raising us up from a lower to a higher state; for God is infinitely exalted above man.

Measured by such a standard, the religions of heathendom would sink in my estimation into worthless self-delusions. How could I wish to worship a God which I had myself cut out of wood or stone? or the sun and stars which ever move in the self-same orbits, which hardly enjoy as much freedom as myself; which only exercise an influence on the growth and life of material things, and even on these produce their effects indirectly? How could I worship animals, which, however useful they may be to me, yet tremble when I threaten, and are guided by the strength of my understanding? Can man be more exalted than his God?

The true faith must make me more Godlike. For, if by God I understand a being infinitely perfect, powerful, wise, and good, I may expect that the faith revealed by Him shall have power to make me also stronger, not physically, for in bodily strength the animals may surpass me, but spiritually stronger—strong to overcome all earthly things: hunger and thirst, and outward violence and inward passions. Not until my soul has attained such capacity can I recognise it as inspired with divine energy. I expect that the true faith shall make me wiser, that is to say that I shall learn from it how to make my fellow-men happy, as God makes all created beings happy. I expect that by the true faith I shall become worthy of, and fitted for eternal existence. For though earthly excellence may pass away, spiritual excellence must endure for ever, because God Himself is eternal.

The faith which is truly God-inspired must be in accordance with all the claims of human reason and understanding, and must moreover solve satisfactorily all the dark mysteries which reason and understanding cannot penetrate. For how can I believe a faith to be truly divine if it be at variance with my reason? or how can I call that a divinely revealed truth, in which I discover a want of common sense, revolting to me even in purely human concerns?

All men are endowed with reason, and all are naturally gifted with the capacity of thought; therefore there are a number of truths which have at all times, in all climes, among all nations, and under all

circumstances been recognised as such; therefore there are things regarding the truth of which mortals never can differ. But the mental powers of all men are not equally developed. Therefore, if a faith is to be recognised as divinely inspired, it must be in harmony as well with the reason of the most highly informed and acute men, as with that of ignorant persons unaccustomed to consecutive thinking. Were this not so, then the religion bestowed by God on all mankind, would not be adapted to all, and would not be comprehensible to all, and could not approve itself as truth to all! I should expect that a faith originating in Heaven would be as easily understood by the unlearned as by the learned, by the child as by the old man, and that it would act equally beneficially on all hearts.

Nay, as the human reason is bound within finite limits, and is therefore unable to comprehend supermundane things, a divine faith must satisfy the claims of reason more fully than it can do so itself. It must explain to me why my spirit is gifted with such a wealth of rare qualities, of which in this life it can make no satisfactory use, and by far the smaller number of which can here attain their true development; it must explain to me my instinctive yearning for happiness through virtue, although I frequently see vice enjoying the most brilliant earthly position, while virtue pines in misery; it must explain to me why my whole being aspires towards perfection, although I know that the hour of death must come which will put

an end to all aspirations. It must show me why the Allwise has given me aspirations which seem doomed never to be satisfied, why He has endowed me with capabilities which seem destined never to attain to maturity; why He has given me this thirst for a perfect happiness through virtue and wisdom, which yet appears to be utterly beyond my reach?

I should say further, that that faith must be truly divine, which is in most perfect harmony with the eternal order of creation. For all things that emanate from a Being of infinite perfection must be in perfect harmony with each other. If nature and revelation be both from God, they cannot be at variance with one another, nor be mutually destructive of each other, but must on the contrary confirm and support one another. A faith that should teach me to injure my body, to put a stop to the propagation of the human race, or to degrade myself to the level of the animals, and to deny my human dignity, would be in contradiction with the order of the divine creation, and could not therefore be from God.

Finally, I should say, that faith must be truly divine the teachings of which would infallibly promote the highest happiness of mankind were they followed by all men. For in the Deity I recognise the All-good Creator, who has called other beings into existence in order that they may participate in the highest bliss. Even man, had he the power of creating, would shrink from giving life to other beings in order to plunge them into eternal misery and pain. How then can we sup-

pose that God would do so? I cannot call that religion divine which inspires man with enmity against his fellow man. I cannot call that religion divine which makes it impossible for all men to live together in civil concord, so that universal contentment, wellbeing, and security may be established among them. I cannot call that religion divine which does not make all men equal before God, and does not teach that all have equal rights, but which, on the contrary, looks upon some as God's favourites, upon others as His step-children, and which acknowledges in some only a claim to His love, while to others it assigns the lot of being objects of His wrath. I cannot call such doctrines divine which I could not wish to see practised by all mankind, because universal misery alone would be the consequence thereof.

Such would be the signs by which I should distinguish the true heaven-born faith from such religions as were invented by man. Its final object must be the infinite happiness of all spirits, the glorification of all things earthly, the union of heaven and earth, of time and eternity, of finite existence with the infinite, and the absorption of all in the fullness of the Godhead.

And were I a stranger, coming from a distant and lonely island in the ocean, whither the name or the words of Jesus had never penetrated, and I heard His doctrines and His revelations as to divine and human things—as to what is of this earth, and what belongs to eternity—verily, had I never before held communion with any mortal on the subject, my first exclama-

tion would be: "He came from God, and His voice is the voice of God, and the truths which He teaches are eternal like God, and in full harmony with the whole of God's creation;" and though no one had as yet said to me, "Believe in Him, for His words give eternal life," I should exclaim, "He who believeth in Him believeth not in Him, but in the One who hath sent Him."

His doctrine alone is truly divine; and had it never been confirmed by miracles, had it never been sealed with His blood, it would be in itself a miracle, a rising sun to every darkened soul, a bond between each human being and God, a Jacob's ladder by which man may ascend towards the Deity. No man could have invented it. He who disclosed it must have surveyed with far-seeing eye the mysterious order of the entire creation and the laws that rule it, and have known the power and the calling of the human spirit, as well as the strength of the human passions—the foundation of states as well as the conditions of peace in each individual human heart. He must have known the thoughts of the wisest of mortals, as well as the feeble powers of mind of little children, in order to make Himself so clearly understood by both; and who could do this before Jesus appeared? What the wisest and most learned of the ancients thought, and how they acted, is not a secret; their opinions and their teachings are still extant in the books they wrote; but whose wisdom comes near to that of Jesus? Who ever embraced as He did, in the most simple connexion, the

most important concerns of humanity in all ages? Who has, like Him, given, in a few words, the solution of all the enigmas of life?—yea, given these in words the truth of which is at once apparent to the wisest and to the simplest mind—words such as these: God is our Father; love is the sum and substance of all the commandments; to become perfect as our Father in Heaven, is the great end of all spirits; temporal existence and eternal existence are one and inseparable.

The religion which Jesus has given us must be of divine origin, for I recognise the hand of God in its rise and in its propagation. Who was the Lawgiver of humanity? Who the Saviour that rescued the world from darkness? By what power did He establish the sway of the faith which He taught over all minds? Was He, like Moses, the chief and leader of a great people, whose least sign was obeyed by thousands, who were indebted to him for having taken them out of bondage? Was He, like Mahomet, a fortunate warrior, who had won the enthusiastic attachment of large hosts by his victories and his eloquent words, and who led his followers on to the overthrow of thrones and the conquest of nations? Was He the Ruler of a great and powerful state, or the pupil of the most enlightened sages of His times?

No! He came heralded by no claims to admiration, surrounded by no splendour, but humbly and meekly, and preaching abnegation of the world. A manger was His cradle. Ofttimes He had no place where to lay

His head. No one knows His teachers, yet He grew in wisdom and understanding. Simple, ignorant men, belonging to the lower classes of the people, were His first disciples. Even the people from which He descended, in the midst of which He lived, was at that time one of the most despised of the earth, and paid tribute to a foreign master. And this singular, this incomprehensible Being stirred in its depths the world of spirits, and the change which took place in men's minds transformed all the circumstances under which the nations were living: the altars and temples of heathendom fell to the ground, thrones crumbled away, and empires vanished from the earth.

Whence did He derive this wonderful power of wisdom? Had He devoted the whole of His life to the acquirement of knowledge and the study of science? Had He been gathering during a long series of years experiences as to human and Divine things? Far from it! He was a young man of nine and twenty years of age when He stepped forward from the obscurity of His previous life. (Luke iii. 23.) He was in the full vigour of His manhood. And at that age, when other men are most strongly moved by passion, when the senses, the love of pleasure, the greed for money, and worldly ambition, in most cases hold sway over the spirit, He came forth in His majesty, like a Being from another world, victorious over every passion, carrying out to the full His own principles, and no one was like unto Him.

He refused the military leadership offered to Him.

He refused the throne of David which He was invited to ascend. He spoke of a higher kingdom which He had come to found. At first He was understood by few; but He went His way, teaching and conquering, and foretelling the future fate of the world, and of His doctrines, as though the books of Eternal destiny lay open before His eyes. And that which He foretold, which none of His contemporaries could live long enough to verify, the truth of which only posterity could witness, has been wonderfully fulfilled in the course of ages, and of the complicated play of the world-events.

What a long period of labour and teaching was not required to establish such a kingdom of God on earth! How many other doctrines have not been forgotten, which were taught for half a century or more, in the most populous cities of the world! How many states which it took long years to establish have fallen into ruins in a few months! And Christ preached mostly in lonely places; the entire period of His public teaching hardly extended over more than three years! He died as a young man, in the full bloom of a divinely great and perfect life!

Was this man a mortal? Verily in Him the Deity revealed Himself to mankind wonderfully, as in all His works. The Divine Son came from God, and God was with Him.

How gladly would I learn more about this Incomprehensible Being! But all the earlier events of His life have remained unknown. The Evangelists, who

wrote the history of Jesus, contented themselves with merely giving the world a narrative of His public career as a teacher. They did this in the most admirably simple and artless style, without any attempt at embellishment, and without endeavouring to dazzle or attract. They wrote without consulting one another, and without the one having any knowledge of what the other was doing, whence many divergencies have arisen as to the general order of their narratives; and yet they substantially agree on all points, so that the one may serve to elucidate and to interpret the other.

The faith of the Christian bears its Divine origin stamped upon it, and advances with majestic firmness between the two opposite errors of superstition and unbelief.* In this faith my soul finds satisfaction, and every doubt its solution; in it I discover all that the human race most needs, and through it man finds grace before the Most Holy, and the consolation of forgiveness for his sins.

It is true, I still behold schisms and differences in the Christian Church—and yet I confess: there is but *one* God, *one* Christ, *one* truth, and *one* Christianity! There are several Christian Churches but only *one* Christian religion; there are several disciplines and many opinions, but *one* Christian faith only!

The simplicity and sublimity of the doctrines of Jesus were often found too high by presumptuous men, though the understanding of a child could comprehend them. Men bound in the fetters of sense

endeavoured to introduce improvements into them, which were alien to the words of Jesus. Jews and heathens who were converted took over with them into the new religion many of the notions connected with the old; they were too humanly weak to divest themselves at once of all the errors of their early education; often, indeed, they misunderstood the doctrines, as we may see from St. Paul, who in his time already had to complain of the spirit of party prevailing in the Christian church. Thus arose the various sects and ecclesiastical parties, and thus the differing religious opinions. But ought we to attribute to the Divine religion itself that which is but the fruit of human weakness? Nay, the Christian faith is simple and pure to-day as it was more than eighteen hundred years ago. We still possess the very words which Jesus spake, and the very words which His immediate disciples wrote.

The differences of opinion that exist among the various Church parties and Christian brethren in faith, are but differences of human views; and in so far they must change in the course of time which changes all things; no earthly power can prevent this. But the teachings of Jesus remain unalterably the eternal Word of God. The pure religion of Christ remains a firm rock of God to all eternity, and to it the human race is firmly bound. Yea, as certain as it is that the laws of human reason are at all times and in all regions the same, so certain is it that with advancing civilization the Christian faith will become the religion of all

denizens of the earth. At present, at the expiration of only two thousand years, it is the faith of the most civilized nations of the world, and the time must come when there will be but one flock and one shepherd.

Yea, ever dearer to me than all the treasures and legacies of this world, will be the faith, the divine inheritance, which my Saviour bequeathed to me. This faith lights up the darkness that formerly enveloped the most sacred concerns of man; through it I shall become more godlike and be lifted up above human fears and sorrows; in it alone I shall find comfort and courage in the storms of life, and peace and true happiness. It has reconciled me with death; it invests with new charms the world beyond the grave.

By this faith I will hold fast, however much men who are the slaves of their senses may scoff! Their mockery is a melancholy proof of their own degradation. By this faith I will hold fast, though the sceptic in his pride may seek to undermine it. Ah, unhappy man! he is at variance with himself, and having misapplied the powers of his own mind, he seeks to comfort himself by robbing others of their comfort. Despairing of his own light, he would fain learn from others whom he has led astray, how to find the right path again.

I will hold fast by this faith, O God, and by its blessed power, as I have received it into my heart through Thy Word spoken by Jesus; I believe in Thee, in the threefold way in which Thou hast been

revealed, as Father and Creator, Almighty Wisdom and Love! I believe in Thee, Diffuser of happiness throughout the world, and in Thy Son Jesus, glorified above all Thy other children; I believe in Thee, All-animating and Holy Spirit, who consecrateth us to perfection like unto Thine own! I believe in thee, O mine own spirit, created for immortality, and in thy final attainment of perfection through the merits of Jesus. I believe in eternity, in which there will be retribution for all spirits, and in which dwell judgment and mercy. Amen.

EVERY MAN HAS HIS PRICE.

When the world's voice bewitches,
  I will her spells despise,
Nor set my soul on riches,
  For wealth so swiftly flies.
As a true Christian knight,
  When passions strong assail,
  I'll combat, and prevail,
Through God's own holy might.

Shall I vain shadows follow,
  E'en to destruction's brink,
And for some phantom hollow,
  Myself, my treasure, sink?
No! That which I adore
  Is God-like—lifts from earth;
  It makes me know my worth,
And feel my value more.

Oh God! hear Thou my prayer;
  When pressed on either hand,
Let not deception snare,
  Give me the strength to stand.
Teach me a perfect faith,
  To know myself, to be
  Impregnable through Thee,
Triumphant e'en till death.

(Gen. xxxix. 9.)

It is a curious trait in human nature, that each individual places the highest value on himself; treats the

world as if it were only in existence on his account, looks upon himself as if he were the central point round which all things turn—and that yet, in spite of this universal self-appreciation, so many persons make themselves the slaves of others, or of some insignificant desire of their own. This contradiction in the human mind, this inordinate pride of men in combination with ignorance of their own true value, this insatiable self-seeking in connexion with so contemptible a depreciation of themselves, is so common, that we are only astonished that thoughtful persons, perceiving it in others, are not thereby led to discover it in themselves!

Every man has his price, says the proverb. And how true is the saying—what knowledge does it not evince of the depths of the human heart! Those who possess sufficient penetration, or sufficient knowledge of human nature, soon discover in others what price they put upon themselves, and treat them accordingly. If it be a low one, the foolish men are made the instruments of the designing ones.

Every human being puts a price upon himself. The proud and presumptuous smile and say: "There may be poor weak creatures in the world who are willing to part with their life, their honour, their uprightness, for a mere trifle: venal judges who allow themselves to be bribed; self-indulgent voluptuaries who may be tempted by every new opportunity to forget innocence, good name, honesty, and all else; but to me you might offer millions of money, and all

the pleasures in the world, and I should never be tempted thereby to commit a low or dishonourable act!" Yet try to flatter them, and you will find they give way; offer them honours, titles, a more commanding position, and to secure to themselves these brilliant baits they will plunge entire countries into misery; let them be placed in circumstances so desperate, that were their position to be known they would lose the esteem and honour in which they are held, and they rage like madmen, and become deceivers, robbers, assassins, and if they cannot even by these means conceal their shame, they end perhaps with suicide! Ah, how many countries, how many thousands of happy families have been precipitated into misery, by the ambition of a few selfish men! How many have not sacrificed fortune, friendship, love and even life, to save the honour of their name or their house! The price of these men is then some outward honour or dignity, the loss of which they refuse to survive.

"They acted foolishly, no doubt," cry others, "as does every one who burdens himself with cares and sorrows for the sake of the empty bubble, fame. Of what importance can it be whether people show us a little more or a little less outward respect? Who does not know the world and the oscillations in its judgments of men. The very person it idolizes to-day it scoffs at to-morrow. It bows its head to thee, but in its heart it despises thee. The more honours we attain, the more we have to suffer from envy and rivalry. Nay, for such a price I would not sacrifice the happi-

ness and peace of my days or the principles that guide my actions, and still less my life." So speaks he who would perhaps give himself away for a much lower price. Invite him to your table, and he will caress you, though he may have had the most evident proofs of your unworthiness. Place good wine before the wine-bibber, and he will drink with delight until he is intoxicated, and then in his drunkenness divulge the secrets of his friends, or use without shame the most obscene language, and agree to any infamy that may be proposed. Let him but grow poor, and be unable to carry on the same luxurious, self-indulgent life as heretofore ; he will not be content with poorer fare, he will not learn to bear worthily the loss of his accustomed comforts, he will think death preferable to such a life of privation. Oh how many a rich epicure would become his own executioner were he suddenly to be impoverished, because he would consider it impossible to live on the reduced means which would nevertheless be sufficient to support several frugal families! The price of this mean wretch is thus a certain number of full dishes, the juice of certain grapes, and a handsome house.

"Yes ; but such mere sensualists belong to the most contemptible of mankind," cries another. "I would never degrade myself to the level of the animals, and live merely to tickle my palate. What to me is luxurious eating and feasting? If my hunger is satisfied, that ought to be enough. And what are posts of honour to me? We ought to be content if we have

not to complain of envy or contempt, and if we are allowed to live in peace, undisturbed by hatred or malice. Nay, to be ready to sacrifice friendship, love, peace of mind and life, for such a price, proves that a man has fallen into the very lowest depths of degradation." Thus speak some. But what price do they put upon themselves, these very persons, endowed with such virtuous principles, and who are so prone to blame others? Put out the gaming-tables, exhibit cards and dice in the light of the brilliant lustres; gather together a party to try the sudden changes of luck—and gone is every vestige of noble pride! The unfortunates rush to the tables. They who at other times may be full of feeling, become hardened against the losses of others; they who at other times are the very soul of honour in all their dealings, now, for the sake of gains of which they ought to be ashamed, allow themselves to have recourse to all kinds of base tricks, as long as they can hope to avoid detection. These men, at other times the tenderest of husbands and fathers, when seized by this infernal passion, no longer think of wife or children, but gamble away all that the latter have to depend upon. The misery of wife and child touches them not; the tears, the supplications, the warnings of friends and superiors, the contempt of inferiors, all are in vain. They gamble on; and when at last Fortune turns away her false face from them, and, deprived of means, without one resource left, they find themselves mocked at and despised by those who are dividing their spoils, then

despair drives them into all kinds of villany. In order to be able to gamble again and perhaps recover what they have lost, they make use of money held in trust for others, they deceive their superiors, they become forgers and perjurers, they sink deeper and deeper in crime, until at length the measure of their iniquity is full, and they destroy their life with their own guilty hands. Alas! how many a man who, by his other excellent qualities, might have been held high in esteem, has ruined himself and his family past redemption, through his unhappy passion for gambling! The price of such men is, therefore, the passion for a pastime destructive both to mind and health—the passion for the excitement caused by the sudden changes of fortune experienced when gambling with cards or dice.

Every man has a price for which he gives himself away. THEREFORE YOU ALSO HAVE YOUR PRICE. And what is the price at which you value yourselves, with your faith, your honesty, your innocence? You seem struck with amazement. You doubt whether there be any price on earth for which you would give away yourselves—your peace in this world, and your salvation in the next. Have you, then, up to the present day, been so entirely proof against all temptations, that you have yielded to none, not even to the most enticing? Have you invariably turned away with a shudder from the luring sin, when your honesty, your chastity, your peace of heart, your fidelity to right, were in danger, as did Joseph when he was tempted

and he cried, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

It is possible that the passion for gambling never touches you, but can you say the same as to vanity? Or if vanity never leads you to commit acts derogatory to your true dignity, does dislike to others never tempt you into false steps? Or if it be not hatred, is it pride? And if not pride, are you never tempted by carnal lusts? Or if not by these, by greed for riches and gain? Or if not by covetousness, by fear of contempt? Or if not by fear of contempt, yet by obstinacy or even by malignant joy at the misfortunes of others? Alas! were I to recapitulate the long list of human weaknesses you would perhaps be forced to admit that there are several prices at which you would sell yourselves. Blame not the warrior who stakes his life for small pay! Blame not the mariner who exposes himself in a frail bark to the caprice of the wind and the waves, because he risks his life for trifling gain! It is their business and their trade; but thou, thou dost sacrifice for far more transient and worthless gains, honour, wellbeing, virtue, and domestic happiness.

Every man has a price at which he sells himself. What is thy price? Hast thou ever weighed how much thou art really worth? Go into thy chamber and devote some moments of earnest thought to an examination of thyself, and try to discover for what earthly good thou wouldst be likely to give thyself away? Look no further back than the past year; pass

in review thy secret thoughts and silent wishes even of the last few weeks only! Ah! a short while will no doubt suffice to show thee thy weak points, which, had they been assailed by any tempter, would soon have revealed to thee at what price thou wouldst have sold thy goodness, thy Christian principles, thy heaven on earth, thy eternal prospects. Thou shudderest? Thou wouldst rather not look into thyself? But if thou valuest thy goodness, thy Christian principles, thy heaven on earth, thy eternal prospects, ah, shrink not from this self-investigation! It is a great and decisive moment in thy life, when thou beholdest thine own deadly weaknesses and the dreadful rocks which every moment threaten the safety of thy soul. Perhaps it depends upon this very moment, which forces self-knowledge upon thee, whether thou wilt ever give away thyself, and all that thou now holdest sacred, for a contemptible reward, for the satisfaction of some low desire, for some trifling consideration; or whether, exercising noble self-control, thou wilt ever cling to God and possess thyself.

Every man has his price at which he sells himself. Dost thou know thine own price, thine own value?

Alas, O Omniscient God! Abashed I cast down my eyes before Thee. I am not worthy of the love and mercies Thou hast showered upon me from my early youth. How noble is the dignity with which Thou hast invested me, how paltry, how contemptible the value I have placed upon myself. I am Thy creature, O God, Thy child, O merciful Father,—and I render

myself unworthy of Thy loving kindness, for the sake of some low sensual enjoyment, some base pleasure. I am a human being. I stand high in the graduated scale of all God-created beings; high above myriads of other creatures, who have neither reason, nor knowledge, nor revelation, all of which have been vouchsafed to me; and yet, dishonouring myself, I forget and destroy my inherent human nobility for the sake of things which even the animals, naturally so inferior to me, do not value. In my hopes and my loves, in my sympathies and my antipathies, I but too frequently lower myself to the level of the brutes.

I am born for immortality! The portals of eternity have opened to me a prospect of bliss of which I cannot here below form even an approximate conception. A thousand other beings die daily at my feet. They were, but are no more. But I, more exalted than they, enlightened by God, I am destined for immortality. And how have I deserved this preference, this exalted lot, above millions of other created beings? Woe is me, I have already sold the nobility of my soul for the vilest price, for the gratification of my sensual desires or my foolish fancies, or to conform with some human prejudice. Ah, how often have I not sacrificed the peace of my life in order to gratify my angry feelings, my vanity, or my lusts. I have sold my hopes of perfection, my claims of eternal happiness, for a handful of perishable dross. I have been bought and redeemed from death by the blood and sufferings of Jesus. He, the Divine Man, came and

showed me the way to the Father; He sanctified my spirit by His teachings; and on Golgotha He sealed with His blood the holy work of redemption. But woe is me, for when tempted I have thought but little of the lessons by which He endeavoured to purify me from sin; and how rarely have I performed deeds of faith, though thoughtlessly professing with my lips the words of faith! I have sacrificed myself and Jesus' work of redemption in order to satisfy a wish which a few minutes after I repented of. How weak, how worthless have I not often approved myself; I, a God-created, exalted being, destined for eternity, redeemed by Jesus!

I shudder at my own shortcomings. Why have I so often yielded? Have I lacked warnings and lessons? Have I not been admonished by the words of Jesus, by parents and relatives, by solemn promises demanded of me, by serious events in life, all of which have placed before me the dreadful consequences of wrong-doing? Why have I so seldom exercised the self-control which ought to be the attribute of a being of such exalted destiny, and through which alone I can rise above the animals, who are guided by their passions and their blind instincts? What has been my reward for sacrificing my better self in this way? Alas! fleeting pleasure, and but too often enduring pain and bitter repentance! Why are so many human beings inwardly discontented and unhappy? Because they have sold themselves at a vile price, and are paying the penalty of their folly.

Blessed be the hour in which, by God's care and

long-suffering, I have been led to look earnestly within and to recognise the vile price at which I have been in danger of giving myself away. I shall now spurn it when offered, and when again tempted in a manner that would lead to degradation, I will look up to Heaven, to my destination in eternity, and to Him who wrestled for me in Gethsemane, and say, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Dead ashes may be exchanged for dead ashes, and merchandise for merchandise; but the virtue of my spirit must never be given in exchange for the satisfaction of some ignoble, earthly desire; my constant inward contentment must not be sacrificed to a momentary intoxication of the heart and the senses. "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16, 26.)

The truths taught by Jesus Christ, the Christian virtues, the approval of God, must not be given away for any price; for what thing in the universe has any value, if divine things be not above all price? For these the Divine Man sacrificed His own holy life, when the world of sinners condemned Him; for these the holy Apostles of Jesus died amid dreadful sufferings; for these the first Christians bore joyfully poverty, persecution and shame, chains and tortures, and for these they calmly encountered death. Therefore the names of these just ones shine forth, to this day, in the annals of men and in the records of Heaven. Their greatness of soul, their power of self-control and

self-abnegation inspire us, to this day, with rapturous admiration. Yea, there is still something that is exalted above earthly power and dignities, above gold, and beauty, and fame, and all that the senses rejoice in. There is still something that cannot be bought for all the bright things of this life which our secret desires may be vaunting to us, as the tempter vaunted the glory of the earth to the Saviour in the desert and on the mountain-top. And this is the image of God in a virtuous human spirit, whose eyes are lifted above the dust of this earthly existence, and are turned towards eternal things.

But this image of God, alas! how blurred and indistinct is it not in me! Merciful Father, may I—sinful as I am—may I look up to Thee? May I still pray to Thee? I shudder at my own unworthiness. God, my God, I would fain pray to Thee! Be merciful to me, poor Sinner! Amen.

PATIENCE AND GENTLENESS SUBDUE ALL HEARTS.

Yes, Father, yes, it shall be granted me,
O'er all my foes to gain the victory.
Not strong in pride, will I their faults reprove,
But win by love.

Humble, like Christ—still ready to up-bear
The poor and weak, the bruised reed to spare,
With tender hand to raise up those that fall,
Forgiving all.

Ever in haste to put mistrust to flight,
To bind shall be my work, not disunite;
To calm with soothing touch the festering smart
Of the sick heart.

So shall I dwell in holy peace divine,
Sparing men's frailties, they shall pity mine.
So shall I too, upheld, oh Lord, through Thee,
Forgiven be.

(1 Peter ii. 23.)

Every age, every rank, and even each sex has some passion or fault peculiar to itself. But the desire to be the foremost everywhere, to possess advantages that others do not possess, and to rule over others

is common to all. Few persons will be found who are entirely exempt from this longing for pre-eminence, whence springs in some cases a craving for fame, in others for riches, in others for beauty, or for knowledge; in some instances a contempt of danger, in others a contempt for virtue itself; on one side self-sacrifice, on the other gross selfishness. We are almost tempted to say that most of men's virtues and vices spring from the same root.

This craving for distinction, honours, and rank, which dwells as much in the young as in the old, is in fact nothing but a perversion of the natural desire to give expression to the yearning for development and perfection which is inborn in all. This yearning after perfection was implanted in us by God. It is this which keeps all our other desires and feelings in activity. It is this that has tamed the savage man, has polished the rude, has enriched the poor, has made the indolent active, has taught the ignorant knowledge, has inspired the timid with courage. It is this alone that makes the highest virtue possible.

I say, it was God that implanted in us this yearning after excellence; because there is no man on earth in whose bosom it does not dwell, and without it we should be morally dead, indifferent to good and evil. Christ Himself appealed to this desire for high perfection, and made it one of the fundamental pillars of His edifice of faith.

However, when this inborn aspiration degenerates, it no longer seeks the wished-for pre-eminence in the

highest cultivation of the spirit; not in that which, because of its immortal nature, is alone capable of perfection—but in outward, earthly things, which do not depend upon ourselves, and the transient nature of which in itself renders them incapable of developing into true excellence.* Thus perverted, the craving for pre-eminence leads to the most injurious consequences. It is ever present in men's minds, and yet can never satisfy them; it drives them passionately through life, in search of a haven of rest which is never found; and the highest good which it places within their grasp, after pain and trouble unspeakable, is soon found to be but a fleeting shadow, that vanishes while they try to hold it fast. Beauty fades as years accumulate; large fortunes melt away through various mischances; high posts are lost with the favour of princes; fame is diminished by envy; thrones are upset by rivals; and all are blotted out by the cold hand of death. Without one treasure, without one pre-eminent virtue, the immortal spirit, forgotten and neglected in life, stands then poor and denuded.

But in addition to its evil effects as to each individual soul, this perverted craving for pre-eminence, like every other deviation of man from the path which nature, reason, and faith indicate, fills the world with misery beyond expression. It is this which destroys empires, which holds nations in thraldom, which ruins and disperses families. Disunion, pride, luxuriousness, vanity, malicious envy, poisonous slander, joy at the misfortunes of others, avarice, deception, hypocrisy,

raging anger—alas, who can enumerate the manifold vices which follow in the wake of false ambition and the craving for worldly distinction!

And yet, if we look around us, we find this craving everywhere prevalent. If we lay our hands on our hearts, we feel it stirring there also. Thence the want of harmony on all sides; thence so much disunion and contention. Thence the proud and angry feelings that awaken in us when we are contradicted, or believe our worth to be in the least under-estimated by others. Thence the absence of gentle submission, of consideration for our neighbours, of honest respect for their good qualities, and thence the rarity of true friendship.

Let us examine our own hearts; let us ask ourselves whether our self-will, our obstinacy and our unyielding disposition, does not often cause us to disturb the domestic peace, to rend the ties of friendship, to call forth discontent and enmity in others, because we are intent upon establishing *our* superiority, *our* liberty of thought and action, *our* opinions, as against those of others? And yet we cannot bear to see others conduct themselves in the same way towards us. What we do or desire, we call *right;* what others do or demand, we call presumption, love of domineering, inordinate self-esteem, and obstinacy.

How then canst thou be surprised that the world shows thee so little love and respect, that so few persons are truly devoted to thee? Is it not thyself who has mistaken the way to their hearts? Is it not

thyself that in thine error hast forced them to hate thee instead of loving thee? If thou wouldst govern learn first how to do so. By violent means thou canst only create slaves who will curse thee; by craft thou canst for a short while deceive the short-sighted, but they will soon unmask thee, and the tyrant is despised, the wily deceiver is looked upon with disgust.

If thou wouldst govern men, teach thy tongue to be modestly silent, and let thy acts speak. That which in reality deserves reverence will receive it, even from the greatest villain; and that which is really amiable has never yet awakened a feeling of dislike. Now ask thyself whether the conduct of others towards thee entitles thee to suppose that thou possessest virtues which call forth reverence and love? Many persons no doubt possess numerous good qualities, and every man probably possesses at least one virtue, but with this perhaps also some fault so offensive that it dims and outweighs all the good that is in him. Dost thou imagine that thou canst enforce the same esteem for thy faults as for thy merits? If so, thou art mistaken. The judgment of men concerning thee, will ever remain free. Witnesses may be suborned, not so hearts. Limbs may be fettered, not so minds. Whatever is bad will always be called bad, and whatever is good and noble will be called good and noble.

Therefore complain not of other men's hearts, but of thine own faults, which arouse the hostility of those

with whom thou art to live, instead of attracting their love. Avoid in regard to others that which thou findest blameworthy in their conduct towards thee. Learn to bear their faults with patience, and be gentle and courteous in thy demeanour to every one. This is an unfailing means of subduing all hearts. Follow the Divine example of Jesus Christ, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter ii. 23.)

Perhaps thy pride, or, as thou wouldst call it, thy self-respect, revolts at this advice—"I cannot act thus," thou sayest, "it is not given to me to do so. Why should I be silent when I am right? Why should I tamely submit when I am insulted? Why should I not show my indignation when I see wrong done?"

In speaking thus, O friend, thou betrayest the poverty of thy heart, as regards all truly great qualities. If thou didst indeed stand higher than thy fellow-men, their contradictions, their errors, their perversity would not stir thine ire, and their insults would only make thee smile. The mighty lion walks on calmly and undisturbed by the little dog who barks at him. If thou hast never experienced this noble feeling of superiority, thou wilt hardly be able to understand me. If thou knowest it, then why dost thou not strive always to retain it?

Thou art not to be silent when thou art in the right; thou art to speak, but with gentleness. Thou

art not to nod assent when thou seest injustice committed; thou must try and see justice done, but gently. Thou art not to smile with contentment when any one insults thee; thou must stand up for thyself, but with gentleness. Noisy anger, unbending self-will, obstinate insistance on rights, and a love of contradiction, will only call forth anger and resistance in others, and thou wilt add wrong on thine own side to wrong on theirs.

Perhaps thou sayest to thyself: "It is very well to recommend this, but it is impossible always to be moderate. It is not given to every one to be able to master and restrain himself when burning with indignation." But to this I reply: What man wills to do, he has the power to do, and when he really wills it he can restrain himself. Thou, also, art able to restrain thyself when thou art in the presence of persons whose position inspires thee with respect. It is, therefore, to the weak only, O coward, that thou showest thy courage, or to those whom thou mayest defy without danger to thyself; in the presence of higher and mightier persons it is fear, not anger, that rules thee.

Attempt not to excuse thyself; thine own conscience accuses thee of falsehood. Thou also canst, if thou wilt, but thou wilt not, because by showing thy anger, by threats and stinging words, thou hopest to make others submissive and slavishly obedient. This is thy real aim,—why, therefore, dost thou complain that in the hearts of other men thou findest no faithful attachment, no tender love, no true esteem? The

fault is not in the others but in thyself. Who would expect to purchase loving embraces with sword cuts? Who can expect to win affection by hard and bitter words?

Patience and gentleness alone subdue all hearts. They pacify the angry, disarm the most violent, and lure on love and admiration. One man is generally, without specially willing so to be, the echo of another. Love is met with love, pride with pride, anger with anger. Why then dost thou bewail the dissensions in life, the contentions in thy home? Give first to others what thou askest of them, and they will return it to thee. Gentleness calls forth gentleness, impetuosity provokes contradiction.

Patience and gentleness subdue all hearts. Patience with the faults of others springs from the consciousness of our own value, and of how much we are exalted above all petty insults. A man of worth cannot possibly be hurt by the presumption of a man of no worth, nor a noble mind by a fool's pride in his prejudice; nor a person rich in virtues by the abuse of the vulgar minded, nor a strong man by the blow of a child's hand.

Gentleness springs from the love and respect which we owe to all men as such, and which we have a right to expect from them in return. Gentleness is always the distinguishing mark of superior wisdom and superior virtue; it is one of the loveliest blossoms of magnanimity of soul. The more abject and degraded

a man is, the more he will be given to cursing, swearing, quarrelling and abusing.

God cannot know anger, nor can the true sage who is godlike in mind. In the capacity of parent, or superior, he may express disapproval of what is wrong, but he will set matters right again without violence; when the duties of his office demand it he will punish faults, but with the loving intention of improving the criminal; when his own rights are attacked he will defend them, but without violence or asperity; and when injustice is done to him which he cannot prevent, he will prove how little he has deserved such treatment, but he will not seek revenge, or return like for like.

Patience and gentleness can alone subdue the hearts of men. But this gentleness is in no way allied to that pride which looks down with disdain on every opponent; such pride is the result of silent wrath, not of the feeling of our own true value, which is ever veiled in modesty. The pride to which I have alluded is the silent, yet cunningly calculated language of anger, which seeks a bitterer revenge than can be expressed by hard and taunting words. The restraint which anger thus puts upon itself is not gentleness, but premeditated cruelty; not love, but hatred.

True gentleness is tranquil friendliness, mild earnestness, which involuntarily inspires or commands a similar state of mind in others. It does not however consist in a set smile, which becomes mawkish in its

unalterable sweetness, because it is no true index of cheerful tranquillity of mind, but only a grimace and a mask. A person who smiles on every occasion and at everything, either proves himself to be deficient in mind and culture, or in heart and true feeling. He smiles even when he harbours malice; he smiles even when contempt is heaped upon him. He is devoid of delicacy of feeling, both as regards himself and as regards others.

The gentleness of the Christian, on the contrary, is founded on true and deep feeling. A wise man is not indifferent to the love and respect of others; and therefore he treats an angry person with such consideration as seems due to one, who, being intoxicated, is not in full possession of his reason. He shows that he is not indifferent to being misjudged, and therefore endeavours to calm down the person who misunderstands him, and to bring him into a state of mind that will render it more easy to form a dispassionate judgment. It is in consequence of the wise man's correct feeling of his own value, that when he has committed a fault, he willingly confesses his error. This frankness disarms his opponents and diminishes honourably the offence, which would only be increased by denial, or must awaken doubts as to the goodness of heart of the person who would defend it as a righteous act.

Gentleness, when coupled with proper feeling, wins all hearts; for, in such case, it indulgently excuses every thoughtless act of a fellow-man, and bears patiently with his weaknesses and peculiarities,

without burning incense before them. For flattery and fawning are as far from being gentleness, as hypocrisy is from being virtue. The wise man desires only to promote peace, and mutual esteem, toleration and consideration, from which alone domestic and public happiness can spring; the flatterer proceeds craftily, leading men on for his own purposes and turning their passions to his own advantage. The wise man places his dignity and his happiness in being able always to act with full self-possession, and free from the fetters of any strong passion. The flatterer, on the contrary, tries to rob others of their self-possession and their freedom, by blinding them or lulling them to sleep with deserved or undeserved praise. Gentleness is a constant mood of the mind in the true Christian; flattery is a temporary expedient, which ceases when circumstances alter.

A man ought to unite with gentleness, dignity; a woman, kindly grace. He wins by the influence of his calmness and moderation on the understandings of those that surround him; she, by the effect of her amiability on those that approach her.

A Christian bears even the direst calamities with dignity: he retains it even when bound in the fetters of the tyrant who persecutes him. Even while railed at, scorned, and jeered at by the base mob, he is imposing in his majesty. Jesus bore with meekness and patience the insults which the raging multitude heaped upon Him; when He was reviled, He reviled not again; and when He suffered, He

threatened not. Amidst the gibes and jeers of the people He dragged His cross to the place of execution on this hill, but His dignity did not forsake Him even at that dread moment. He bore the shame with meekness and spake: "Daughters of Jerusalem weep not for Me, weep for yourselves and for your children!" And with such majesty did He encounter the most painful death, that even amidst the brutal multitude cries arose: "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Just as the dignity of man, which blends so harmoniously with his gentleness, is not an assumed and artificial manner, but is the spontaneous expression of the consciousness of his own strength and worth; so is the kindly grace of woman, with which the meekness of the Christian blends so beautifully, an outgrowth of her very nature; for it is not the nature of woman to govern by strength and pugnacious defiance, but by sweetness and loving submission. Physically of more delicate frame than man, she cannot command obedience and respect by the fear she inspires, but only by her kind and gracious manners and conduct. Anger disfigures a man, but it degrades a woman, and renders her repulsive and ridiculous. An angry man, if his indignation be inspired by his feeling for innocence, right, and truth, as opposed to malice, may call forth respect; an angry woman desecrates the holiest of causes because she desecrates herself.

Patience and gentleness subdue all hearts. Gentleness wrenches the dagger from the uplifted hand of

the infuriated, and stays the curse which is about to drop from the lips of the wrathful. It extracts the bitterness from envy, and makes the blush of shame rise to the face of the malignant slanderer. This virtue, one of the loveliest inculcated by Christianity, is a child of Heaven, which spreads around itself the peace of Heaven. Life becomes sweeter in the neighbourhood of a man who is always cheerful and temperate, and of whom we know that, although he disapproves of our faults, he will not wound us with hard words; who is always *willing to allow justice where* it is due, and who, with amiable modesty, would rather suffer wrong when no one else can be injured thereby, than obstinately insist on being right, and thus risk losing a heart that is attached to him.

Gentleness subdues all hearts and also ennobles them. Not only vice is seductive, virtue is so likewise and in equal measure. Who can resist the charms of love and kindliness, and who would wish to meet them otherwise than with equal kindliness? Who can insult a meek and gentle person without at once blushing at his own vileness? Who would give himself up to unrestrained passion when he has the happiness of beholding undisturbed equanimity of mind ever beaming on him from a cheerful, smiling countenance?

Father in Heaven, Thou who art ever the same, ever indulgent, ever long-suffering, ever loving! How often have I not forgotten the surest, most innocent, most worthy means of establishing happiness in my

family, and of diffusing it through all my other social relations. Have I not been the one chiefly to blame when friends have cooled towards me; when opponents have become more incensed against me; when enemies have grown more irreconcilable in their hatred; when good people have lost their esteem for me? Have I not been the first to err when my ill-temper has called forth the ill-temper of others; when my love of contradiction has stimulated contradiction in others? Have I not by my harshness towards friends, and also towards those with whom I am only slightly acquainted, drawn down upon myself the harsh judgments of others, and have I any right to claim indulgence when I am so often wanting in it even to those I love best? Have I not myself poured into the hearts of others the gall which is so bitter to my taste in their conduct towards me?

Lustrous exemplar of my mental life, O Jesus Christ, meek friend of man! Divinely patient sufferer! May not I come near to Thee in these virtues also? Yea, the peace and happiness of my life depend upon the presence of that loveable state of mind which Thou didst manifest so gloriously in Thy life. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

LEARN TO RESPECT THOSE WHO ARE INFERIOR TO THEE.

Let not the man by God more blest,
Regard with scorn the care-opprest,
Who, poor and fainting 'neath their load,
Tread wearily life's thorny road.

Nor let him dream, tho' great and free,
And rich in joy his lot may be,
That raised o'er right, and duty's call,
He shall not give account of all.

Hath he more time, more wealth or lore,
So let him serve mankind the more;
He highest, most like Christ is found,
Who spreads most happiness around.

Unenvying his well-earned height,
The poor rejoices in his might,
Who strives, unconscious of his own,
To make his neighbour's virtues known.

(Sirach xi. 2-6.)

Just as distinct as are ambition and the craving for notoriety from the true desire for perfection, just as

distinct are pride and presumption from the simple consciousness of our own good qualities.

The aim of the ambitious is to be distinguished others, but they are indifferent as to whether it be by the public recognition of true merit, or through mere good luck and the favour of the great and powerful. Those who are possessed by the love of notoriety, thirst for the pleasure of being known, spoken of, and admired by the multitude, without being very particular as to whether the qualities in themselves which attract notice be such as work for the weal or the woe of mankind. The yearning after greatness of soul and spiritual perfection is felt by the truly wise and virtuous, by the real Christian only, and springs from the consciousness of what we ought to be, in order to fulfil our high destiny. Ambition and love of notoriety work for an earthly guerdon, and even when they achieve great and useful things, they have their reward in their success. "They have their reward." (Matt. vi. 2.) But the noble yearning of the soul for inward perfection and elevation can find no satisfaction in or through earthly things. It aspires towards the highest, the most Divine aim: towards likeness to God. Therefore, it can accomplish the greatest and most useful things without a thought as to whether men will notice and honour the agent. It can perform the most meritorious acts without any view to the admiration of contemporaries or of posterity.

Pride is a loftiness of demeanour and an over-

bearingness of feeling assumed in consequence of the possession of certain advantages not participated in by others; presumption is an exulting in a fancied superiority over others, or a boastful display of qualities to which undue value is attributed. But the self-esteem springing from the simple consciousness of our inward worth is the tribute which virtue pays to itself, it is the quiet cheerfulness of a good conscience, which shuns the contact of everything ignoble or impure. Pride and presumption manifest themselves in contempt or depreciation of others, true self-esteem in firm adherence to what is best in ourselves, in modest recognition of our own failings, and in joyful acknowledgment of such merits in others, as announce to us the existence of a noble soul, and of principles in harmony with our own.

But truly wise and great men, that is to say, true Christians, are rare, therefore the existence of genuine self-esteem is also rare. Delusive self-love diminishes in our eyes the faults that disfigure ourselves, and exaggerates the merit of whatever good we may attempt or contemplate. Few of us are sufficiently impartial fully to acknowledge the merits of other people, and to honour them with unfeigned admiration, or without tacking on a little qualifying "but" when forced to praise. Few persons have sufficient elevation of mind to attach no more value than is due to such advantages as are but gifts of chance or of nature, or which have no bearing on the important things of life; on the contrary, most persons are apt to bestow

on these, even when possessed by others, the admiration which belongs solely to true merit, and they are more especially prone to give themselves up to immoderate exultation when such advantages fall to their own lot.

As long as the joy inspired by advantages or comforts which we derive from nature or from fortunate circumstances, expresses itself merely in simple satisfaction at their possession, and we hold in mind that we owe them not to any merit of our own, but that they are ours only through God's grace, then our pleasure in them may be perfectly innocent. But it becomes blameworthy, and even sinful, when it expresses itself in depreciation of other persons because they are not what we are, or do not possess what we possess.

Can anything be more displeasing than the self-vaunting conceit of those who, because favoured by nature and circumstances they are able to develop mental qualities, and to acquire knowledge and experience surpassing those of less fortunate individuals, look down with disdainful pity on their fellow-men who are less gifted, or less learned, or less skilful than themselves; or who scornfully deprecate the understanding and the acquirements of others, in order to make their own talents shine the more; or who will not acknowledge the force of anything which they have not themselves thought, or said, or done; always putting forward their little "I," lest it should be ignored or forgotten by others. This self-conceit is a

fault peculiar to entire classes, whose vocation it is to render themselves useful by their mental acquirements; it is, therefore, commonly called artist pride, or the scholar's pride; but it may also be called professional pride, for it is found in the handicraftsman as well as in the statesman, in the priest as well as in the warrior.

This pride is in itself just as offensive and as repellant as purse pride, also called the trader's pride and the peasant's pride, because it is supposed to belong more especially to these two classes. This puffing-up of oneself because one can afford to have better clothes, better food, better furniture than other people, and the pleasure felt in impressing this superiority on others, are the more senseless, as the benefits on which they are based are not only of such a transient nature that they may vanish in a moment, but are frequently not even the fruits of a man's own industry, and are limited to the lowest enjoyment of which human nature is capable, viz., the gratification of mere bodily and animal tastes.

But equally irrational is the vanity of those who, proud of their beauty (a fleeting good which at the longest can last but a few years) or of their fine apparel and costly ornaments, fancy that these advantages give them a real superiority over others, upon whom as not possessing them they look down with pitying contempt. Alas! how greatly are they mistaken. Beauty that is self-conscious has already lost its greatest attraction, and the expression that denotes an amiable disposition far exceeds every other charm.

Those who pay too great tribute to their own merits, are apt to obtain even less than is their due from others.

Therefore, also, the arrogance of those who pride themselves on their birth, their pedigree, their rank or their titles, seldom attains its object. This pride, which will hardly admit that persons of inferior birth or position are of the same nature as their superiors, or have the same rights or claims in life—obscures any merit which those who are governed by it may in reality possess. He who exalts himself too much, is placed all the lower by others, because his overweaning pretensions remind them that it is not pedigree and rank that confer honour on a man, but that a man must do honour to his pedigree and his rank. But he who with noble humility seeks not to exalt himself, he is placed high by others. For seeing that real greatness of soul which causes him to attach no importance to his outward circumstances and worldly distinctions, others are reminded all the more forcibly of how much he is worth in himself, and they feel that the love and esteem entertained for him are independent of the accidental advantages of birth and position.

We therefore see that among the great and powerful of the earth, those are the most heartily revered by their subordinates, and the most admired by strangers, who, though possessing great power, are modest; who, though wealthy, are simple and without ostentation, and who, forgetful of empty splendour and senseless vanities, are intent only on the performance

of noble duties. The pride of power is always the surest means of diminishing the very power that inspires it; for it calls forth legitimate opposition, and the strength of opponents increases when actively exercised. "Many tyrants have been forced to take their seat upon the ground; and crowns have been placed upon the heads of those of whom no one thought. Many great lords have fallen low, and mighty kings have fallen into the hands of others." (Sirach xi. 5, 6.)

THEREFORE HOLD NO ONE IN CONTEMPT, AND NEVER HURT THE FEELINGS OF ANOTHER BY THE DISPLAY OF THINE OWN SUPERIOR ADVANTAGES. Even worldly prudence inculcates this rule; religion imposes it as a duty.

Undue appreciation of our own qualities in every case betrays weakness either of the head or of the heart; very frequently of both. Do we not know from personal experience how offensive to our feelings are the pride and presumption of other persons, how revolting the conduct of those who endeavour to humiliate us by a sense of their superiority? Well, these very feelings we call forth in others, when we give even the slightest evidence before them of how much we exult in the possession of qualities or perfections in which they are failing. Instead of humiliating them, we only stir up their pride. Instead of securing for ourselves respect and admiration, we inspire opposite feelings, namely secret ridicule, contempt and dislike. Now, when a person acts so senselessly as

to do the very reverse of what he desires to do, he gives evidence of weakness of understanding.

In addition to this, any one who prides himself upon his superiority over others, generally becomes the slave of the very persons above whom he thinks himself so elevated. For how much of the enjoyment of life does he not sacrifice in order to secure to himself the exalted opinion of those whose approval is hardly worth soliciting? And how imperceptibly does he not become the servant of those who are cunning enough to avail themselves of his weakness by flattering his vanity and pride. A proud person is always the most easy to guide. You have but to recognise his pretensions, and he is in your power. He fancies that he is idolized, and he becomes the football of the designing, the instrument of the ambition, the blind contributor to the self-seeking of others, and he is set aside and forgotten by his flatterers when he is no more needed for the attainment of their ends.

Look down upon no one, treat no one with contempt, and pride not thyself on thine own advantages. For such presumption is always offensive, and is never forgiven. Every individual bears within himself the feeling of his own rights, and demands that others should respect them. Everyone knows what he is worth in his own position, and cannot with equanimity bear the attempts of others to destroy, as it were, this elevating consciousness. Besides, many persons attach but little value to the very distinction on which thou pridest thyself. Thou vauntest thyself of thy

rank, which, perhaps, others have repeatedly refused; of thy riches and possessions, for which others care naught, because they have as much as they want; of thy knowledge and thy skill, while the interests and the desires of others are turned in another direction; of thy beauty of face and figure, while the tastes of men differ so greatly, that what one admires another thinks displeasing. The less, therefore, others appreciate that which thou wouldst impose upon them as of surpassing value, the more are they hurt by thy latent or thy unconcealed pride; the more offensive to them is thy presumption and thy depreciation of others. They feel they have not deserved this, and are therefore the more deeply wounded by the contempt in which thou holdest them. The instances are rare in which proud persons have escaped humiliation even in this world. Whoever rouses hostile antagonism thoughtlessly prepares discomfiture for himself and malicious joy for others. There is a warning truth in the old proverb: Pride must have a fall. "Be not uplifted because of thy apparel, and be not proud because of thy dignities," says an ancient sage, "for the Lord is incomprehensible in His ways, and no one knows what may be His will."

Hold no one in contempt because he is less, or has less than thou. For the advantages thou possessest are not the highest possessed by man. No one comprises within himself all perfections. God has endowed men with various qualities through means of which they may become useful and valuable; none

of these qualities are contemptible. Therefore, honour not so much the good which thou possessest as that which others possess and which thou lackest, and strive to become like unto them therein. Even the lowliest being, whom thou considerest hardly worthy of a look, may perhaps exceed thee in most valuable qualities; dost thou know him so intimately that thou shouldst undertake to decide what he is worth? No man is so bad that he has not some good side; no man so inferior that he may not exceed thee in some kind of skilfulness, in some useful quality. "The bee is a small insect," says Sirach, "and yet produces the sweetest honey." He who turns the talent received from God to the best account, and proves most useful in his position and in his time, he is the most worthy of esteem, be his sphere of action high or low, wide or narrow. Not what we *are*, as to worldly position, but what we *do*—not what we *have*, but the use we make of it, determines our value. Therefore, look not down upon that which is lower in man, but upwards to that which is higher; fix not thy attention upon what thou hast, but upon that which others have which thou hast not. For that which thou lackest is of far more importance as regards thy merit than that which thou possessest.

Look not with contempt on any one, but even shouldst thou feel contempt for thy fellow-men, beware never to let it appear, for thou wilt be preparing discomfiture for thyself. Many a person may be too powerless to do thee good; but no mortal is so

powerless that he may not some day do thee an injury. "Vaunt no one because of the great honour in which he is held, for perchance it may be his misfortune, neither despise a man because of his lowly estate." (Sirach.) However insignificant the place of an individual in the social fabric, he may, by a special combination of circumstances, become very important to thee. Man is not powerful by his own strength alone, but by the force of circumstances which conspire in his favour. It is not an unheard-of event that poor servants have become the supporters of their former masters; that the bread of the beggar has appeased the hunger of the rich; that common varlets have saved the lives of princes; that slaves have given freedom to their masters. And equally numerous are the cases in which individuals, poor, insignificant, and powerless, have caused the ruin of the richest, most learned, most powerful, or most important personages. Thou knowest not what thy fate may be in future, still less what may be the fortunes of those whom thou now despisest. Perhaps in a few years a lucky concatenation of events may place them in so favourable a position that thou wilt consider it an honour to be reckoned among the friends of one whom to-day in thy pride thou lookest down upon.

But above all it is religion that must deter us from the melancholy aberration of heart and mind called pride, by reminding us that God, our Father in Heaven, is also the God of the lowliest of our fellow-men; that the wise man is the brother of the ignorant, as the

king is the brother of the beggar, and as the loveliest maiden is the sister of the least attractive one; while lowliness may also be taught us by the example of Jesus, who, notwithstanding His high wisdom, and His godlike qualities and virtues, always remained touchingly faithful to His noble humility and self-abnegation. Indeed how can we be proud of things which do not in reality belong to us, which are only talents entrusted to us by God for our earthly life, alas, perhaps not even for so long, perhaps only for a few short years!

O God, have we then received Thy benefits in order that we may proudly boast of them to other children of Thine, or in order that we may use them for their good? Away then with this senseless pride in gifts which we have obtained from Thee without any merit of our own; gifts for the use we have made of which we must one day account to Thee!

Pride of any kind is an aberration of the mind. Therefore it is also of all the passions the one that most frequently leads to real madness. Nay, Father in Heaven, I will watch myself, lest the innocent pleasure with which I regard the talent thou hast entrusted to me degenerate into presumption, and a contempt for others, on whom Thou hast in Thy impartial and all-comprehending love bestowed advantages and qualities in which I am failing.

Not pride, but a sense of noble elevation above the transient trifles of life, shall hold possession of me, and shall inspire me with a respect for that which has an

eternal value, and which, if I possess, I shall one day appear before Thee without trembling. And should false self-love ever threaten to blind me to the truth, I will recall to mind the death of those whom I have loved best, and consider of how little avail in their last moments were all their earthly distinctions; I will remind myself of my own dissolution, and of what I shall then probably think of beauty, which will so soon be converted into dust and corruption ; of riches which will pass to others; of fame, whose voice will be lost in the grave ; of rank and power which will vanish like shadows with my last breath! Amen.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

The righteous man how blest is he!
  Thou art his God, his great reward;
Oh, that my life might righteous be!
  Thus ever present with the Lord:
So should I feel my anxious soul
Was drawing near perfection's goal.

Away self-pride and vanity,
  'Neath which my frailties lie concealed;
Unveiled before my searching eye,
  Faults, failures, all shall stand revealed.
What is more meet for man to learn
Than his own nature to discern?

Who, who can tell how oft he fails?
  Thou, God, alone canst search me through,
For good Thy strength alone avails;
  Oh take me, Lord! my heart renew;
Make me desire all pure to be,
From every hidden sin set free.

(2 Cor. iii. 5.)

The human soul is like light that illumines everything but itself. When the soul attains full conscious-

ness, its knowledge may extend from the nearest objects to the most distant stars; yet within itself all may remain so dark that no eye can penetrate its gloom.

Through the instrumentality of our senses, our soul takes cognizance of form and colour, of articulate and inarticulate sounds, and of all other matters in the outer world; but concerning itself it learns nothing except through its inward activity and its self-consciousness.

The spirit solves many a riddle on earth, but that which lies nearest to it, the mystery of its own being, it cannot penetrate.

This strange difficulty of self-knowledge extends even to our own bodies. We see all other things far oftener and far more distinctly than we behold ourselves. There are, indeed, many parts of our body that we never see. We are able without difficulty to picture to ourselves, even when they are absent, the appearance of persons with whom we are more or less familiar, but our own image we cannot bring before the mind's eye, however frequently we may have gazed at it in the mirror; at all events it dwells but vaguely and indistinctly in our memory.

This strange fact must have struck many. Why has the Creator thus ordained it? Does not the question naturally arise: "I know so many things, why myself least of all?"

That with which we are thoroughly acquainted, we cease to observe. But as we never behold ourselves

except in a kind of misty twilight, our attention and our curiosity are constantly incited to seek to penetrate the obscurity. Thus every individual is made to feel that the noblest object of study which man can select is man himself.

But the spiritual, thinking, willing element within us, which we call the soul, cannot be observed through the senses. We learn to know its existence through its self-consciousness alone; or through its activity, its thoughts, wishes, desires, and feelings. Even the souls of other men we learn to know only through their activity. And as all human spirits are, by the highest Spirit, endowed with reason; as this reason in all acknowledges the same laws as to what is true, right, and good: we are by means of these laws enabled to judge as to whether one spirit is nobler, more perfect than another, according as its inward character is revealed in a higher or lower tone of mind, in nobler or less noble aims, words, and deeds.

It may be said with truth that the beginning and foundation of all earthly wisdom, as well as its highest object, is self-knowledge. Therefore, "Learn to know thyself," was the fundamental doctrine of one of the noblest sages of heathen antiquity. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures recommend the same means for attaining true wisdom when they say: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." (2 Cor. xiii. 5.)

Without intimate self-knowledge I am incapable of judging wherein consist my good tendencies and

capacities, which it is my duty to use for higher purposes, as also what is the principal source of the various failings which prevent me from enjoying full satisfaction with myself and with things out of myself. How can I convince any one of error if I do not know what errors are peculiar to him? Or how can I improve a thing the defects in which are unknown to me?

The majority of men are, however, far too little familiar with themselves. In consequence, they are apt to mistake their defects for virtues, and also either to over-estimate or to underrate their real good qualities and capacities. Therefore, also, they are seldom quite self-consistent, but contradict themselves both in words and deeds. They have no perfect self-dependence, but allow themselves to be carried away by the stream of circumstances; they keep their eye on the haven towards which they are steering, but not on the ship in which they are borne along.

Yet he only, who makes it his constant occupation to observe all the workings of his own mind, learns to know what is really valuable in human society. How should he learn to know this, who knows nothing of himself, or who is foolish enough to judge himself according to the inspirations of his self-love alone? It is no wonder if he believe that the world misjudges him, though in reality it judge him more correctly than he does himself. Thence arise constant collisions and misunderstandings; thence also constant dissensions and want of mutual love.

Many a man fancies that he is magnanimous to his enemies, and ready to forgive them, because he holds out the hand of peace; whereas it is but his cowardliness that makes him desire to be in friendly relations with those whom in his heart he really hates. Many a man believes himself chaste and moral, because he has not fallen in the same way as others; but he does not take into account the circumstances that have saved him from falling. It was perhaps not so much horror of sin that withheld him, as want of opportunity, or fear of the shame that might follow. Many persons, again, believe themselves to be benevolent and kind, and devoted to the common-weal, because they feel pleasure in affording aid to all undertakings planned for the benefit of individuals, of the city in which they live, or of the whole country. But they fail to observe that in the depths of their hearts sits ambition directing all their actions, and that, perhaps, they have never done a kindness which they have not allowed to become known to one human being at least. It is a gratification to them to do good, but at the same time it is also a gratification to know that others are aware of it.

These self-delusions are the consequence of imperfect self-knowledge—and how could he lay claim to being called wise, who is ever apt to deceive himself more or less grossly?

What is my value in the human community? What part do I play in it? These questions, which are so important to us, and in which even our self-love

is interested, cannot be answered without long and close observation of all that passes daily in our own minds.

Not until we have become familiar with the most secret folds in our own hearts; not until we have learnt to discern the lower as well as the higher motives by which we are actuated on every given occasion; not until we have learnt narrowly to watch the varying feelings that determine our decisions, and dictate our utterances, can we acquire an unerring and trustworthy standard by which to measure other men.

Ah, let no one who has not closely scrutinized himself venture to pronounce judgment on the words and deeds of his fellow-men, for his judgment must infallibly be superficial, and founded on appearances only. If he have no clear knowledge of himself and of the source of his own feelings, how will he be able to divine the secret motives of other hearts? But he who has deeply studied himself, will, by the melancholy remembrance of his own weakness, learn to be lenient to the defects of his fellow-men, while at other times he may hesitate to join in the loud chorus of praise raised by the multitude. He knows but too well how little real merit there may be in actions which the world lauds, and how much indulgence and tender consideration may be due to many unhappy beings whom the world condemns, because tempting circumstances, hot blood, or the pressure of want, have led them in passionate self-forgetfulness to commit

a deed, the memory of which a whole life of repentance does not suffice to blot out. Through self-knowledge only can we attain true knowledge of human nature, and through this latter alone can we acquire power and influence over other men.

Everybody has some reason for wishing to obtain influence over the persons in the midst of whom he lives. Be this influence greater or less, it is in every case essential for our own happiness. For how should we be able to live without the aid and the sympathy of our fellow-men? How should we be able to carry out anything useful in the community, if we could not win over at least some few others to our views? A knowledge of human nature teaches us how to touch hearts, and how to overcome the obstacles which exist in the minds of our fellow-citizens, and which are apt secretly to obstruct our most noble undertakings.

Self-knowledge is of so much importance in regard to our entire life here below, and also in eternity, that to acquire it ought to be the chief task of every Christian who is anxious that his immortal soul should attain a high degree of perfection even here on earth. But how can it ever attain such perfection if he neglects the first step towards it; or how can he hope to reach the highest degree of perfection, in the eternal kingdom of spirits, into which his soul shall pass at the moment of his earthly dissolution, if he have not the courage to seek to become in this life already, as good, as pure, and as great as his opportunities will admit of. It is true the beginning of all things is difficult, so also

of self-examination. We shall, no doubt, often weary of it; often neglect it, in order not to touch some wound of the conscience which is still smarting; often postpone it, because some contemptible passion within us is still craving to be satisfied. At all times, moreover, self-love will blind the mind's eye to its own deficiencies, and will throw a cloak over its weaknesses, and endeavour to conceal from view certain blemishes. For to attain self-knowledge we have first to wage war against our lower self; we must first impose silence on our ambition and our pride, on our covetousness and our tendency to voluptuousness, on our hatred and our anger, in order that the calm voice of reason may make itself heard.

Consider, before every important action in thy life, what thy conduct ought to be as a Christian and a rational being, and whither, on the other hand, thy sensual desires and thy feelings are impelling thee. Then decide quickly in favour of the right, of that which thy conscience approves, and subdue thy selfishness, however strenuously it may resist.

Reflect after each act, by which thou hast either benefited or injured another human being, why thou didst this, by what motives thou wert actuated. Search with unflinching eye for the secret causes, however cunningly they may have concealed themselves. If perchance thou hast acted not with deliberate forethought, and calm mind, but hast been hurried on by various circumstances, without being allowed time for reflection, inquire, nevertheless, what were the feelings that

agitated thee, and how they originated? Whether thou didst right to allow them to gain the ascendant at that moment? Whether thy precipitancy has not perhaps caused thee to sink in the estimation of those who until then held thee in the high esteem of which they thought thee deserving because they had never before seen thee so weak? What is the reason why on this, as on so many other occasions, thou art discontented with what thou hast spoken? What is the true though secret cause of the impetuosity of which thou art often found guilty? Is it not thy latent vanity which is always breaking forth, sometimes even against thy will? Or is it perhaps thy wounded pride, which however loudly thou mayst deny its existence, still holds thee in subjection? Or is it uneasy, ever-craving covetousness, of which thou art the slave, and which overlays all thy good qualities?

If thou searchest thy heart with a sincere desire to know the truth, the real sources of thy various feelings will not remain hidden from thee; and if, when thou hast discovered them, thou findest them so impure, that for thine own honour's sake thou wouldst fain conceal them from the whole world, why dost thou not eradicate them at once, however much it may cost thee? What worth can that esteem have in thine eyes, which thou knowest within thyself thou dost not deserve, and which thou feelest persuaded would not be entertained for thee, wert thou seen in thy true colours? Wouldst thou rather cover over a consuming cancer in thy body with gold and scarlet to conceal it from

ignorant mortals, than seek to heal it? Art thou really more perfect because men honour thee? Nay, not so, for thou mayst know thyself guilty of acts and feelings which even deprive thee of thy self-respect; and the omniscient God thou canst not deceive, and He sees the blemishes of which thou refusest to purify thyself.

In the bustle of common life, time and inclination to meditate upon ourselves indeed often fail. The day is devoted to work, business, and intercourse with others; and it is upon these that we are to bring to bear the principles which we have formed in quiet hours of contemplation.

But when at night we withdraw from the turmoil of the world, and, so to say, once more possess ourselves; when darkness spreads its wings over us, and everything around is hushed in silence and repose, and we are given over to ourselves and God alone—God, whose might upholds us even in the darkness, and in whose hand lies our life, and the health and existence of those we love!—Then is the time for earnest self-examination. Nature seems to force us back into ourselves, and the events of the day that has just gone by, pass voluntarily before the mind's eye, to allow themselves to be reviewed.

Then prove thyself as the Scriptures bid thee: if thou hast lived in faith, *i.e.*, if thou hast throughout the day thought and acted with the propriety, nobility, dispassionateness, courtesy, and desire to serve others, which thy Saviour Jesus, and through Him, thy God hath commanded thee. Begin with the question:

"What action have I performed to-day, which will bear witness before the judgment seat of the Omniscient of my willingness to do right? What faults were most active in me to-day, and caused me to be guilty of unjust deeds, or unworthy feelings? Whence come these faults, and what can I do to conquer them, and to cherish the virtues that are the opposites of them?

"Perhaps I have been passionate and violent during the day, and have hurt, without any adequate cause, the feelings of some acquaintance, or of some inmate of my home. Perhaps I did not reflect at the time that the persons who offended me, did so from thoughtlessness, and not with any malicious intention. Yet what a difference does this not make? At least they did not merit my treating them with so much harshness. Do I feel that I have done wrong? That I might have acted far otherwise?

"It is true, whispers self-love, ever ready with excuses, it is true; but after all, it was very natural that I should act as I did, for I was out of temper, and when this is the case we do not weigh our words.

"But this excuse proves that I was aware that my mind was unhinged, and knowing this why did I allow my ill-humour to vent itself on an innocent object? I knew that I was depressed or discontented, why then did I not at once make a resolution not to allow myself to say a harsh word to any one while I was in that mood, but to remain silent, even should cause be given for anger? For it is well-known that when angry, as

when intoxicated, we see things, not as they really are, but in a perverted light.

"But perhaps it was not only that day but habitually that I am prone to anger. Self-love whispers: it is a defect in the temperament, and faults belonging to our nature are not easily eradicated. But who knows whether it is really a defect of temperament, or, if so, whether it may not nevertheless be conquered by a resolute will? Have I made an attempt? I am always able to curb my irascibility when in the presence of high personages, or of strangers, or when surrounded by those whose esteem I am anxious to retain—do not these instances, in which I am able to restrain my temper, convict me of error when I maintain that it is part of my nature, and cannot therefore be eradicated? If I am able to conquer it at one time, why not at another? If a sudden diversion of feeling has proved in one instance to be an efficacious preventive of the outbursts of my passion, why do I not try the remedy each time my ill-humour threatens to get the better of me?"

Such is the way a Christian speaks to himself in quiet hours of self-examination. But even when most determined to silence the whisperings of self-love, when probing our own worthiness or unworthiness, and seeking to see ourselves in a true light, we rarely succeed in being quite impartial. Our judgment of ourselves will always in a great measure take a colouring from the mood of the moment. That which seems to us of very little importance when we are in a cheer-

ful state of mind, appears to us in hours of dejection even more reprehensible than it really is.

For the acquirement of self-knowledge, it is therefore very useful to listen to the judgment of sincere and upright friends, and to ponder on what they may have to say as to our defects of mind or conduct. If they judge rightly, our conscience will not fail to tell us so, and the flattering testimony of self-love will be put to shame. Nay even the judgments of those who are hostilely inclined towards us, may be of the greatest use in enabling us to detect our foibles and our shortcomings. For an enemy will be more sharpsighted as to our smallest defect than the best friend.

To acquire self-knowledge shall be the constant task of my life, for it is the mirror in which my soul beholds itself. It is the beacon that guides the spirit through the darkness of life! I will henceforward sit in judgment upon myself with deep earnestness, that I may be the more certain of rejoicing in the grace and mercy of the Lord, my God. I thirst after perfection. Thou, O my God, hast placed in my way the means of sanctifying and ennobling myself: how can I justify myself, if I despise and neglect these means.

Oh, support me with Thy might and strength, when, in accordance with Thy holy commandment, I prove the worth of my own heart. The thought of Thy will, and Thy Omniscience, will remind me each night of rendering an account to Thee, and to myself—an earnest account, such as it behoves me to make to the Omnipresent, before whom all deception is vain.

He who is in the habit of keeping such account with himself, each day diminishing the number of his debts, and each day increasing the number of his virtues: Oh, he may in the last hour, when an account is to be rendered of his entire life, look up with a happy smile and childlike trust to Thee, O Heavenly Father. He will have done as much as in him lies. Be merciful unto him! Amen.

EQUANIMITY OF MIND.

Cheerfully calm, the Christian's life
  Flows on—God dwells within his breast;
E'en in the midst of passion's strife,
  He knows his goal, and is at rest.

Nought can his trusting spirit shake;
  Joy's wildering draught can ne'er beguile;
Though his last anchor seem to break
  In the storm's rage, he still can smile.

(PROVERBS xvi. 32.)

IT cannot be denied that we are ourselves the authors of the greater number of evils under which we suffer. If we are living in enmity with others, part of the blame generally attaches to ourselves. If we are labouring under secret sorrow, we may mostly accuse ourselves, with justice, of having been the cause of it; and yet we would all fain be happy!

How are we to explain the existence of this desire *for* happiness side by side with that unpardonable imprudence which is ever leading us to destroy with our

own hands that which we have endeavoured so carefully to build up? How is it that though ever wishing to secure to ourselves a cheerful state of mind, we, at the same moment, do everything in our power to destroy our own peace, contentment, and joy? How is it possible to understand that man, though loving himself so devotedly, should nevertheless act towards himself with a cruelty from which even his bitterest enemy would recoil?

If I look into myself and earnestly seek for the reason of these contradictions, I find that one of the principal sources of my discontent is the excessive liveliness of my feelings and the over-wrought sensitiveness of my mind, to which at first I give myself up with a certain experience of pleasure, but which end by overmastering me, instead of remaining under my control.

To persons with acute feelings every pleasure does indeed come with double zest, but to them also sorrow comes with greater poignancy. He who gives himself entirely up to the emotions which arise in him on some given occasion generally converts his joys into sources of discontent, while, on the other hand, every mishap causes far more vexation than it ought reasonably to call forth.

It is true the amount of sensibility with which we are endowed does not depend upon ourselves, but is a gift of God, a quality of our minds which we have received from nature. We cannot make ourselves otherwise than we are; but we can at all times retain

the mastery over our feelings, and control even our most lively sentiments. And our highest duty, as well as mere worldly prudence, demands this of us.

Man cannot indeed prevent that which is joyful from affecting him pleasurably, but he can prevent himself from acting foolishly in his joy. It is equally true that man cannot always prevent sudden anger or indignation, or unutterable grief, from taking possession of his heart, but he can control himself so as not to speak or to act during the first outburst of his passion. Many persons who are otherwise by no means evil-minded do an immense deal of mischief, merely because they do not sufficiently control themselves, or perhaps even consider it meritorious to let themselves be entirely carried away by their feelings. A poor merit, indeed, which we share with every unreasoning animal!

There are people, otherwise true, trustworthy, prudent, and reserved, who, when their hearts overflow with joy, so completely forget themselves and what they owe to others, that they divulge their own or other people's secrets with unpardonable thoughtlessness; others do the same during paroxysms of anger. How many bitter hours, how many years of repentance have not such momentary imprudences caused!

It is still more common to see persons of over sensitive disposition as much affected by some slight mischance as they might be by some real misfortune. Even insignificant circumstances excite their

feelings in an extraordinary manner. A dream, a mere fancy will suffice to depress their spirits for a whole day, and to render them incapable of any enjoyment. Such sensibility, though often a result of physical weakness, is as frequently the effect of a self-indulgent, ill-regulated, and morbid mind, which has never yet had the courage to make even an attempt to master its own feelings.

The evils that may be caused by such absence of self-restraint have been made manifest by a thousand sad experiences. It is well known that persons whose feelings are very excitable and who exercise no control over them are liable to become victims of the craft of others and to be led by them; and that those who think themselves thoroughly independent because they give themselves up without restraint or reserve to all their caprices, are the weakest, and most dependent on the unworthy characters that surround them. It is well known that persons whose minds are disturbed by strong passions always act with less prudence and judgment than those who enjoy a more equable state of mind, and who never lose their self-possession. It is well known that when over-excitable people refuse to exercise the power which the soul has over the body and over the ebullition of the feelings, they at last become intolerable to themselves and insufferable to society, that they injure their health, and that they not only cut off the joys of life but shorten life itself, and thus become as it were destroyers of themselves.

Even the ancients taught men that they ought to

observe the golden medium in joy and in sorrow, that even as to sentiments intemperance is a vice. Indeed all wise and virtuous men commend equanimity of mind, and Jesus Christ, the Divine Founder of our religion, set us throughout His earthly life a sublime example of a moderation, which in the hours of joy never exceeded the limits of propriety and dignity, and of an equanimity which in the times of deepest grief was never shaken. Whether at the joyful wedding feast in Cana, or in the fearful hour of agony on the Cross, Jesus was always the same, always meek, calm, benevolent, anxious for the welfare of others, without exuberance in joy, without impatience or dejection in sorrow.

The want of self-possession under various circumstances, the absence of true Christian equanimity, is a great obstacle to peace of mind and to a pure and pious life, because it is a source of many faults and sins.

It is therefore the duty of every Christian, of every human being, indeed, who aspires to true wisdom, and who would enjoy a happy and cheerful life, to endeavour to acquire evenness of mind.

For equanimity is that calm mood of the soul which enables it to act with perfect self-possession, and prevents us from ever giving way to exaggerated grief or joy. The soul of a person who possesses it is raised above every pleasure and every pain, holds these in check, and never allows itself to be overwhelmed by either.

A Christian ought always to be the same, that is to

say, he ought always to be absolute master of himself. Only in so far can he vindicate for himself the sublime position which his religion assigns to him among the creatures of God. By this it is not meant, however, that he is to be indifferent to, or unreceptive for, pleasure. No; a pure heart may always be a cheerful heart, but he must never allow himself to be intoxicated by pleasure. Nor does it mean that a Christian ought to be impervious to suffering himself, and without sympathy for the sufferings of others. No; he is human, he must therefore suffer, but he need not be conquered by the ills of life. Painful emotions may arise in him, but he will soon regain his composure. He is like a lofty rock, round its base the stormy waves of the ocean foam and break, its breast is wrapped in dark clouds, but its summit rises majestically into the bright sunlight and reflects the dancing beams.

Think not that the attainment of this sublime equanimity, this glorious, never varying serenity of mind is a task beyond thy powers. Think not that it is chiefly a matter of temperament, or dependent upon outward circumstances. Great is the power of circumstances, and great the influence of our sensuous nature: but mightier than both is the soul of the Christian, of the wise man.

Say not that thou art content to continue as thou art and that thou desirest no more happiness than thou actually enjoyest; that thou needest not to do violence to thyself; that others must just bear with thee as thou art; and that if thy excessive sensibility and sen-

sitiveness, and the exuberance of thy grief or thy joy should prove injurious to thee, it is thine own affair, and thou wilt know how to support it! No; this is a question that bears intimately not only on thy earthly happiness, but on thy health, the duration of thy life, thy Christianity, thy self-improvement, and even on thy eternal happiness!

It is true, an equable state of mind cannot be attained without a struggle, without self-subjugation; but never-failing serenity of soul, this heavenly fruit of wisdom, this jewel of a pious, Christian heart, is well worth even the severest struggle.

The first step towards the attainment of equanimity is constantly to keep a watch over ourselves, so as not to allow our feelings on any occasion whatsoever to get the better of us, and that happen what may we always remain calm and collected. He who has acquired this habit of self-watchfulness, and the firm will never to lose his self-possession, has already half won the victory; and verily, man can do a great deal; by firm determination and constant care he can effect a change in himself that is truly astonishing. The soul, which in ordinary men and women, is made the slave of the body, may, by the exercise of its power, effect beneficial changes even in the natural tendencies and capacities of the physical being.

He who can govern himself, is capable of governing others also. A mind, the happy serenity of which can never be overclouded by any outward occurrence, is always better able to judge correctly the acts of others

and the end to which things are leading. He who possesses such a mind deserves the name of sage, and his equanimity inspires respect, and often awakens admiration; on the contrary, a capricious mind, the balance of which is easily upset, is wavering in its judgments as well as its actions, contradicts itself, loses its self-respect, and, as a just and natural consequence, also the respect of others. It never sees the world in a true light, but sometimes in the flattering colours of its own imagination, at others enveloped in the dark mists of its own dejection.

Therefore learn to control thyself! Refrain from action as long as thy feelings are over-excited; speak not, or at least weigh well thy words before speaking, when joy or grief, fear or anger, threaten to overwhelm thee. He who retains a serene mind, disarms even the most embittered enemy by the dignity and calmness of his demeanour, and as he runs no risk of exposing his weak points in his impetuosity, he has no fear of being wounded. A temperate man plucks the rose of joy with wise caution; the impetuous man plucks it without thinking of its thorns, and the smart of his wounds thus soon embitters the pleasure he sought to secure. Beware not to form resolutions in the heat of passion, nor plans during the intoxication of pleasure. With returning soberness comes repentance. Let not all the warnings received in life prove vain.

When thou discoverest a change coming over thy feelings, and perceivest the swell of indignation or of wrath rising in thy heart, or that melancholy is veiling

thy soul in darkness, or that thy joy is becoming uncontrollable, seek to divert thy mind! Go into some other place. The change in the surrounding objects will call forth new images, will awaken other thoughts and feelings; the balance of thy mind will be re-established, and thou wilt remain lord of thyself, and independent of the external things of the world, while thy inward contentment will continue undisturbed, and thou wilt have spared thyself a blush of shame and a pang of repentance.

But this equanimity, which is an object of desire to every Christian, to every truly wise man, must not be a mere outward semblance, must not only consist in the power exercised over the expression of thy countenance and over thy gestures: it must dwell in thy soul. Christian equanimity does not consist in the art of concealing our feelings in the presence of others; in the art of smiling while the heart is bursting with suppressed passion; nay, Christianity is something more than mere worldly wisdom, it is deep and soul-animating truth. The bright glance of the eye is not to be an effect of art, but the expression of a serene soul.

Indeed, what would such pretence avail thee? Thou mightst perhaps impose upon others, but in so doing thou wouldst deceive thyself even more. Thou wouldst cheat thyself of peace of mind, of health and purity of soul. Even thy very hope of being able to deceive others is a self-delusion, for they will soon discover thy artfulness when they perceive

what contradiction there is between thy actions and thy apparent placidity; and the more cause there is for distrusting thy soft words and gentle looks, the more hated and despised thou wilt be. Shouldst thou ever be guilty of an unjust act, the world will not fail to place thee in the rank of cold-hearted villains, of hypocritical sinners, or of untrustworthy flatterers.

Be pure, be truthful, be simple, and never appear before the world, nor before thyself, in a double character. Control not only thy words and thy gestures: be master of thine own heart! If the acts of men seem revolting to thee, and thou feelest thy equanimity giving way, seek to divert thy thoughts. Recall to mind that men are not radically bad or malignant, but erring beings. They err from want of insight; they err in their judgments of thee; they err in regard to what they consider good and useful; and they err in their choice of means to an end. Why then wilt thou give way to indignation at what is merely a fault of the understanding? Had they more knowledge, had they been better trained in youth, both their judgments and their actions would have been different. They err also from weakness of character, because they have not strength of mind enough to control their sensual instincts. Thy anger, thy indignation, or thy dejection, can neither alter them nor the consequences of their acts. Be a man then! Collect thyself, and endeavour by some means or other to rectify or to modify the evil they have done. Try to remove from thy sphere

of action any one who may be dangerous to thee by stirring up thy ire, or seek to avoid him.

If a dark mood come over thee, and thou art troubled with fears and anxieties, try to divert thy mind. Reflect that the victory is to the brave, and that the timid are already half defeated. Reflect that calm self-possession enables us to master all circumstances, whereas a dejected mind conjures up mists and fancies that blind its sight. Reflect that just because thou art now depressed, more cheerful hours must be in store for thee. For such is the decree of an all-ruling Providence, which has ordained the eternal mutation of things, that every sorrow, every disagreeable event, is the forerunner of some joy or some happy occurrence.

But endeavour in like manner to possess thyself in gladness, and never in the intoxication of pleasure forget thy higher being. Enjoy with moderation. Remember in the midst of thy happiness, that deep shadows may soon obscure the light—that laughter may soon be followed by tears! Never allow thyself to be enervated by prosperity, and thou wilt bear with the greater courage the vexations which thou mayst have to encounter within the next few days.

He who possesses this truly Christian strength of soul, who walks through life armed with this equanimity of mind, will always observe the golden mean, and will neither be dazzled by the happiness which he possesses, nor morbidly pine for that which he cannot obtain; and will *hold* light the evils with which he is threatened,

and rise calmly above those which have already befallen him. He walks before God—he walks in the footsteps of Jesus—and he passes through the chequered sunshine and shade of this life with unalterable serenity and cheerfulness. He gives and receives love; he dispenses joy and he reaps joy. He soon forgets what has given him pain, but nobly remembers what has done him good!

ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE.

Oh, weary soul, ascend to God,
Before his throne lay down thy load:
He knows thy pain: lay bare each smart,
Still trusting in a Father's heart.

Grief, fear of future care, away!
Beyond my night shines morning's ray,
When free from tears mine eyes shall see,
Him whom I trust—my Saviour—Thee!

Must I long years my yoke still bear?
No; even then I'll not despair,
No earthly pain endures for ever;
God's mercy only endeth never.

(HEBREWS xiii. 5.)

WHAT will become of me in the future? How many days of trouble and sorrow are still in store for me? Will my anxieties never cease—my cares never come to an end? Must my life be a constant struggle, and shall I never be able to look forward with hope, like my fellow-men? Why am I doomed to so much suffering; why is it my fate that no sooner have I extricated

myself from one misfortune than I sink into another? Oh my God, hast Thou abandoned me? Hast Thou no joys in store for me? Are my most ardent wishes never to be fulfilled?

Such are the lamentations sighed forth by those who, sunk in misfortune, gaze out upon the dark future with tearful eyes. Such are the complaints which rise from my troubled soul when depressed by many cares. It longs for rest. It yearns for the sweet peace which is the reward of uprightness and fidelity to duty, of useful activity and pleasant intercourse with fellow beings. But my future is dark and gloomy. I hope for light, but none appears. Alas! so many misfortunes may befall me, that no human wisdom can forestall, no human power avert. And I may succumb under these.

I do not ask for riches or superfluity, but only to be free from pressing cares: only to have some security for the future, only to be able to provide for those who belong to me. In vain has been the good that I have endeavoured to do to all around me. My acts of kindness seem forgotten. No one remembers me. No one holds out to me the helping hand of brotherhood. Every one is engaged with his own pleasures, while I have to struggle painfully for the merest necessities, and, alas! the most depressing of all is that I see no end to these secret sufferings, which I venture to confide to God only.

I ponder on the means of escape from my difficulties, but I know not where to find them. I seek with

dimmed eyes a path which may lead out of them—but there is no one to point it out to me. I have no friend, nay, not one, who lives for me, who could or would help, not one who would care to fulfil the wishes of my heart. I dare not ask assistance from others, for I could never return or reward the services received. I do not venture to lay open to any one the secret and bleeding wounds of my heart, or to disclose the wretchedness which I conceal from the world under a forced smile. Indeed, I should gain little by so doing, and perhaps lose many acquaintances, who still cling to me, because my misery is unknown to them. For such are men; they promise love, friendship, fidelity, as long as they have anything to hope for in return. They are most zealous in rendering services, as long as they think they may be served in like manner. To the rich they give largely in brilliant festivities, and in other ways, but to the unfortunate they are hardly willing even to tender alms.

Ah, I should bear my fate courageously could I but know that in a year, or in any given time, it would be improved; did I but know that some small portion only of my wishes in regard to myself and to those dear to me would be fulfilled. But who can unveil the mysteries of the coming days? The past has become to me a dark abyss; the present a barren waste; and the future a starless night, all darkness and gloom.

I stand alone, abandoned by all. From others I can expect no help. I am thrown entirely upon my own weak powers. There is no one who can bring me

comfort and peace, for there is no one who can penetrate the secret of future events. Alas! who can be poorer on earth than he who lacks even hope in a better state of things, and who can find no consolation.

But stay! So poor thou art not yet, my heart. So poor no Christian can ever be. Why dost thou despair? There is one comforter who holds out the hand of kindness, there is one comforter who will shed light through the darkness that surrounds thee, and who will kindle anew the star of hope. This comforter is RELIGION.

Yes, the religion of Jesus, and none other, assuages the mental sufferings of us poor mortals, enabling us to meet with armed breast the threatenings of fate. It lights up the dark path of life with the torch of wisdom, and quickens our trust, makes our faith mighty to bear and resist, and our power truly strong.

In the depths of my woe I hear a holy voice sounding from afar. With wonderfully refreshing power it penetrates through my heart, and my spirit, endowed with new life, rises up to meet it. I hear a Divine voice calling to my soul—a voice that has sounded through all time to the entire race of man. It is the voice of God, which saith: "I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee!" (Hebrews xiii. 5.)

O sweet comfort of faith, sweet balm of religion, that heals the bleeding wounds, that wipes the tears from the weeping eyes, that silences all complainings! Though all men leave me, God will not leave me! And though the earth may forsake me, Heaven will

not forsake me. I stand alone, yet not unsupported; I have revealed my secret sufferings to no one, yet there is One who knows them. No man has seen the tears which I have shed in the solitude of night, no man has heard the sighs which my misery has forced from my oppressed bosom, and yet these tears and these sighs have been numbered.

Take courage for the future! Commend thy ways to the Lord, and trust in Him! He will take care of thee!

Be of good cheer! Honour the wisdom of God, honour the ways of Providence, which thou canst not change, and which work out the well-being of the world, and the welfare of individual men, however much they may themselves strive against it. Why dost thou despond? Hast thou not the promise of God, the word of the Immutable, that He will not leave thee! He will not forsake thee!

Thou art full of anxiety as to the future. Thou fearest lest worse things even should be in store for thee than those which have already befallen thee. Thou art afraid that all the happiness thou art destined to enjoy may already have come to an end, and that the rest of thy days may be one chain of misfortunes extending to thy grave. Oh, man of little faith! Who is it then that hath promised that He will never leave thee, that He will never forsake thee?

Thou wouldst fain know the future, know whether this one of thy wishes or that will be fulfilled? Well, then, I will reveal to thee in general what will be thy

fate in the future. Instead of straining thine eyes to penetrate into the depths of the time to come, turn them back upon the past and upon thy life during that period; for know, the past is the mirror of the future.

That which thou hast already experienced thou wilt again experience, though under different circumstances and conditions. Wert thou ever in days past unceasingly miserable and unhappy? No, nor wilt thou be so now, or in future. Pleasures are in store for thee, even where thou foreseest nought but pain and trouble. A rose will bloom for thee here and there in days to come, where now thou canst see nothing but thorns. Say not: But time flies, my days go by, I am growing older. For if time flies, thy moments of suffering pass away with it; nothing remains or can remain exactly as it is; but each year, each age, has its own peculiar advantages and enjoyments. Many a happy moment, many a small reward of industry, many a compensation for trouble and vexation, which thou hast never anticipated, will still be thine. Life passes away, it is true; but not so God's Providence, and this watches over thee, and will not leave thee, will not forsake thee.

The past is the mirror of the future. The same God who has hitherto guided thee through so many events, will be with thee henceforth also, and will be thy support. Thou art perhaps at this moment in a precarious position. Difficulties beset thee on all sides. Thy brightest prospects have been overclouded,

and thy best hopes have been disappointed. But remember what has happened before; canst thou not recall to mind how often thou wert sunk in despondency? Canst thou no longer recollect how at times thou wert completely dissolved in grief? How entirely thou hadst given up all hopes of better things? Hast thou forgotten days which thou wouldst fain have converted into long nights that thou mightst sleep away the consciousness of thy misery? But these have gone by; thou hast been very happy since then, hast enjoyed many pleasant hours, and canst now smile at thy former despondency. Well then, take courage for the future also. A time will come when thou wilt almost have forgotten thy present difficulties, and thou wilt look back with shame at the discouragement and depression under which thou art now labouring.

How often didst thou not think that no one could save thee, that no one could help thee. And a few days or weeks went by; the invisible hand of Providence ruled over thee the while, circumstances altered imperceptibly, benefactors known to thee, or perhaps philanthropists never before heard of by thee, came forward to assist thee, because God had touched their hearts; persons, of whom thou hadst never thought, became thy friends; proposals were made to thee which thou wouldst never have dreamt of thyself, and which thou couldst never have expected; various little events, quite unlooked-for, drew thee out of thy painful position, and it was as if the sun came out slowly from

future. He will be so to the whole human race, and to every individual child of man, in thousands of years to come as in the present day.

The unfortunate are naturally superstitious. All ordinary means of extricating themselves from their difficulties seeming closed to them, they would fain penetrate into the realm of the unknown by the help of magic, and extort its secrets from the silent future. They are not ashamed of making the most irrational attempts to accomplish this object, though their reason cannot fail to reprove them. They have recourse to fortune-telling; they endeavour to extract knowledge from the accidental play of things which have no connexion whatsoever with their life and fortunes. They consult all kinds of signs, and draw thence conclusions as to the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of their wishes. They delude themselves, frequently even consciously, and corrupt their hearts and their understandings by their folly.

Never degrade thyself by a belief in fortune-telling, and the interpretation of signs. When thou losest thy faith in God's wisdom, and His fatherly love, thou losest thyself. Reason protests against thy giving thyself up to self-delusion in this contemptible way; for the false hopes which are grounded on these sup-

posed prognostics of what is to come to pass, frequently lead to mistaken and foolish acts, which, instead of securing happiness, on the contrary, destroy all hope of it. The word of God seriously forbids all irrational endeavours to look into the future; and the will of the Almighty cannot be set aside by such futilities, nor His laws be broken. And it is the will of God, and the Divine law of the world, that the future shall be hidden from the sight of man. God has so ordained it with loving kindness, that we may, trusting in Him, and without thought of the trials that may be in store for us, accept and enjoy the present moment, and that, leaving all else to Him, we may hold fast by His invisible hand, which will lead us through the darkness. "Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow," saith Jesus, with benevolent wisdom; "Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." (Matt. vi. 34.)

Anxiety about the future cannot be relieved by such superstitious delusions as I have alluded to, but only by faith in the all-ruling hand of Providence, which ordaineth all things for the best; and by thine own prudent endeavours to remedy or diminish the evils under which thou art suffering. Put thy shoulder to the wheel, and help to promote thine own well-being.

First, reflect maturely in solitude on the present state of thy circumstances. But let it be when thou art capable of seeking out and examining with perfect calmness all the sources of thy misfortunes.

Thou wilt then find, either that thou hast brought them on thyself by imprudence, by some fault, or by thy passionate temperament, or else that they have been caused by circumstances over which thou hadst no control whatever.

If thou findest that thou art not thyself to blame, then there is so much the less reason to despair of being able to improve thy condition, for thou art then suffering innocently, and God is the friend and protector of the innocent. What thou losest on one side, He will give thee compensation for on the other side. For every pang that thou sufferest here, a joy will be held in store for thee elsewhere. Even thy losses, thy afflictions, will, if thou usest them with true wisdom, prove to be no real loss, no real calamity. It is only thy want of courage, and thy self-will, that convert them into such. They ought to be no more than an exercise for thy greatness of soul, and a test of thy faith. Gold is purified in the fire. The strength of virtue is tested in the storms of life. Nobility of mind can never be revealed in its full purity and glory, until all supports fail, and the mind has nothing to uphold it but its own strength. Perhaps long repose and happiness have enervated thee. Now the time has come when matters do not proceed according to thy wishes. Instead of weeping and lamenting like a spoilt and self-willed child, or obstinately persisting in the course which circumstances condemn, rise up like a man, and with calm wisdom order everything for the best. Thou hast lost nothing as long as thou hast not lost thyself;

thou art not forsaken, as long as faith in the support of God has not abandoned thee.

If thou hast been impoverished, or thy worldly prospects are threatened with ruin, and thou foreseest straightened circumstances for thyself and thy dear ones in the future—there is one means by which thou mayst suddenly again acquire competence:—learn to bear privations with manly fortitude. Be proud of this poverty, in respect to which no blame can be attached to thee. A well-stored and noble mind can afford to laugh at such accidental revolutions of fortune. Do thy best for thee and thine, and God will work with thee! He will not leave thee, neither will He forsake thee. Renounce the proud wishes and extensive plans in which thou hast hitherto indulged. It is not money, but his own heart, that makes a man rich. It is not poverty, but only crime, that entails shame.

If thou hast lost friends, and those even dearer than friends—if thou hast been deceived and betrayed by men—if thou art surrounded by envy and calumny—thou hast only lost what could not remain thine for ever; wherefore then pine for that which even thine own reason refuses to grant thee? As for those that have treacherously deceived thee, be proud that thou hast no share in their infamy; in the midst of thy misfortunes thou must be an object of respect to them, in so far as thou hast acted more nobly than they. That the envious envy thee, why should that distress thee?—Wasps ever swarm round the best fruit; let that in thee which awakens envy, be thy

consolation when thou art offended by evil-minded persons.

But if thou art the author of thine own misfortunes, against whom dost thou raise complaints? Why dost thou rest contented with lamenting? Why dost thou sigh forth: "What is to become of me?" Thou seest what has become of thee, and what is further to befall thee is in the hand of God. The evils that are now weighing upon thee are the punishment of thine own follies and sins. Do not augment thy guilt by injurious despondency.

Thou hast fallen: well then, make speed to rise again, and be sure that the hands with which thou hast destroyed thy happiness can build it up again. Let true Christian uprightness be thy support, and the teachings of Jesus be thy guide. Thy sins have brought the curse upon thee; Christian magnanimity and Christian wisdom will bring the blessing back into thy house. If thou hast but the courage to be happy thou wilt not fail to be so. Turn towards the grace of God, and it will again shine upon thee. Follow the footsteps of Jesus, and thou wilt have entered the path of that peace and contentment of mind which are independent of all outward things; thou wilt have chosen the better part! Thou wilt again belong to God, and He will not leave thee, neither will He forsake thee.

Well then, my soul, take courage! Be without fear for the coming days, God will count them out to thee. Arm thyself against every ill-fortune that may

assail thee, with the courage and resignation of Christ. Let not thy magnanimity be overwhelmed, whatever may be the misfortunes that befall thee, and thou wilt have saved everything; learn to bear privation, and poverty will be unknown to thee; renounce thy ambitious and self-willed desires as idle fancies, and thou wilt have nothing to fear but everything to hope from the future.

I am comforted, I feel at rest in Thee, O my God. I will resolutely encounter my fate; I will await with unflinching courage whatever may befall me, for Thou, O Father, who ordaineth everything for the best, Thou, O my Maker, Thou wilt not leave me, Thou wilt not forsake me. Resigned to Thy will I renounce without a murmur all that I have lost, I renounce my wishes for the future, and my ambitious projects; for I know that that cannot be good for me, which Thou, the All-wise, withholdest from me. I will rely on Thy help, without fear or anxiety for myself or for those who belong to me; I will trust to Thy inclining towards me the hearts of those that surround me, or to Thy turning wonderfully in my favour the circumstances that now threaten to crush me. My God, I know Thy Fatherly love, I have experienced it. How often in bygone times has not one moment sufficed to disperse the gloom that surrounded me?

I pray not for happiness, but for strength and courage, and that Thy Holy Spirit may never forsake me, and that the example of Jesus may ever be before me! I will deny myself, as He denied Himself; I will

drain my bitter cup of sorrow with the same holy resignation in Thy will, O Father, as He drained His, and I shall triumph over the ills of these days as He gloriously triumphed over evil, and I shall feel even in the midst of my tears and sufferings, as Jesus felt in His agony, that Thou art the All-merciful and the Ever-faithful God, that Thou wilt not leave me, and wilt not forsake me. Father, who art in Heaven, my soul places its hope in Thee! Amen.

UNMERITED SUFFERING.

He, the Wise, the Everlasting,
Giveth heed,
Knows each need
As through the world I'm hasting.
Shall my Saviour e'er forget me?
His the will
I fulfil,
My measure He hath set me.

Birds that through the air are flitting,
Beasts that rove,
'Tis His love,
Finds food and pasture fitting.
Gives He not each lovely flower
Colours bright,
By the might
Of His Grace and Power?

Shall He, me alone forsaking,
Leave to bear,
All my care,
His presence from me taking?
His I am in faith revering;
Fatherly
Loves He me.
I'll trust his love, unfearing.

(HEBREWS xii. 11.)

SHALL not the heart of man grieve, when it is made to suffer without hope, when it is doomed to lose all

that has become dear to it through long possession, all that has rendered life sweet? Who can command his eyes not to weep in bitter sorrow? Who can stay the bleeding of a fresh wound? In vain is the consolation ye may offer to the sufferers, ye happy ones. Ye can give naught but words. Ye have the sympathetic understanding, but they, the deeply oppressed, have the bleeding heart. Alas! give them not words, but give them back the happiness they have lost, and then perhaps they will thank you, for then you will have given true comfort.

Has not God Himself bestowed upon us all an equal right to the enjoyment of the few pleasures which life affords? Why then are thousands of men happy, while I alone among these thousands have my heart filled with grief and care? The sight of what ye possess, ye fortunate ones, only adds to my regret for that which I have lost. Or have I deserved to be less favoured than you, than thousands of others? Have I been more vicious, am I more guilty than thousands of those that surround me? Has not God Himself planted in my bosom a heart susceptible of every joy? Why should He have made me thus susceptible for that which after all was destined to make me miserable? Why should I be made to cling with love to that which is to be painfully wrested from me? Why have I this sense of all that is good and beautiful, if it is to be converted into a new source of suffering? Would it not be better for me, were I unfeeling as a rock? I should indeed have fewer joys, but I should

not miss them, as they would be unknown to me; and I should, on the other hand, be spared all suffering.

Is not the desire for enjoyment the first that is awakened in the infant? And the desire grows and ripens with the ripening years of the child. It is present in its full development far sooner than understanding, experience and reflection. Enjoyment becomes a necessity to man, and when it has become so, you demand of him that he should renounce it. Why should I be so cruelly deprived of that for which the Creator has given me an instinctive craving?

You would fain comfort the sorrowful. They know all that you would say, but your reasonings do not satisfy them. If they have lost their happiness by their own fault, well then, they must settle matters with themselves, and they must reproach themselves alone. But how is it with those who, without any fault of their own, have suffered shipwreck of everything that constituted the happiness of their lives? With those whose domestic peace has been destroyed by heartless villains? Whose material prosperity has been blighted by the calamities of war, which has reduced them to beggary, and made them, besides, widows and orphans, or who have been deprived of their social position and the means of subsistence by some sudden revolution? Who have lost by the hand of death those to whom they clung with fondest affection? Who have been robbed of the esteem of their fellow-citizens and their daily companions, by the evil tongues of base slanderers? Who

are crushed under the weight of events which no mortal could foresee?

Hold! O wretched sufferer! Thy sorrow may be great and legitimate, but not so thy lamentations. Pain, like pleasure, is a fruit of the earthly part of thy being, but the view thou takest of it ought to be the fruit of thy elevated spirit. Thou canst not prevent thy tears from flowing, or thy wounds from bleeding; but thou mayst prevent thy spirit from becoming unworthy of itself, and from sinking under the burden. The strength of a wise mind consists herein, that it first reflects that what has taken place cannot be altered—that God wills it so; and next, that from the great misfortune a much greater good may be drawn; for Providence has not ordained that which has taken place without a purpose.

But if thou art so entirely absorbed in thy earthly, half-animal being, that thou canst not, like a divine man, soar up to higher sentiments, then thou deservest to be overwhelmed by thy misery like the animals, which cannot by greatness of soul rise above the pains that afflict them. Thou choosest to make thyself even more miserable than thou art through the outward misfortunes that have fallen upon thee; for thou deprivest thyself of the power to derive from misfortune that higher and lasting happiness, which may be drawn from it, like the sweet kernel from the bitter shell. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. xii. 11.)

He who refuses to be comforted unless his lost happiness be restored to him in its old form, thereby intimates that he considers that his own wisdom exceeds that of Divine Providence; for the wisdom of Providence took away from him that which he possessed, in order that in the calamitous hour which saw the wreck of all his earthly happiness, he might be led from this life up into a higher state of being; it was the wisdom of Providence that was teaching him in that dread hour, what is man and all that belongs to him, in order that he might be drawn nearer to God and to all that is divine. It was the wisdom of Providence that showed him that happiness and unhappiness, and the whole play of earthly life, is but a dream given to train the soul, and which showed him this in order to lift him up to a higher stand-point, whence he might be better able to judge of the nothingness of everything under the sun, and that he might be induced to devote his spirit to that which is imperishable like itself.

Every creature on earth has been endowed by God with the right to joy or happiness; he has given it to the tiniest insect, whose life scarce endures from sunrise to sunset. And to all those to whom he gave the right he has also given the power of enjoyment. But Divine Wisdom ordained that light should be accompanied by shadow, and that each joy should have its corresponding pain, in order that mortal man might ever be reminded that the transient pleasures of life ought not to be his highest object, because there is

something higher still. But light and shade, joy and pain have been partitioned among men with the most wonderful exactness and impartiality, so that each mortal should receive an equal share. It is, therefore, difficult to say who is the happier or the less happy. He who is most sensitive to joy, at the same time feels sorrow the more keenly. What appears of great value to one person, and throws him into ecstasies of delight, is a matter of complete indifference to another. Therefore we are liable to err greatly if we judge of the felicity of men by their outward circumstances only. That for which one man envies another, is perhaps to him that possesses it a real burden, the source of all his sufferings.

The true sage, the true Christian, however, must enjoy a higher amount of inward happiness than others. But this happiness is the result not so much of the outward goods that he possesses, as of the correct estimate which he forms of them, and of his never allowing them to be the foundation of his contentment. Persons whose natural bluntness of feeling prevents them from being very painfully affected by misfortune, have indeed so far an advantage over those who are more keenly sensitive, and who are almost driven to despair when calamities befall them. But this advantage is again counterbalanced by the fact that the less impressionable minds are less susceptible of happiness. Therefore, the more deeply depressed thou mayst feel, with the greater certainty mayst thou look forward to being raised up again by the hand of

Providence. The more heartrending thy sorrow, the more intense will be thy joy.

God has endowed thee with a more susceptible heart, not only that thou mayst enjoy the pleasures of life the more fully, but also that thou mayst feel the pains of existence the more keenly, and that thy spirit may thereby receive a stronger impulse to soar upwards. He who has a less excitable temperament is able to act with greater prudence and self-possession whether it be in joy or sorrow. He who is carried away by the vivacity of his feelings, requires greater power to enable him to rise above them; but when he accomplishes this, then also he enjoys true happiness in fuller draughts.

Undoubtedly the desire for enjoyment and well-being is innate in the child, and it grows and ripens with his growth, and the striving after happiness becomes a necessity of man's life. Thou askest: Why should we learn to renounce without a pang that which the Creator has taught us to love? But does He not also teach the babe in the cradle to renounce what it likes best? Has the child not his tears as the old man has his? Is not the longest life as well as the shortest, from the cradle to the grave, one unceasing lesson in the eternal truth;—that on earth no pleasure, as no pain, is enduring; that our path lies between the two, in order that we may learn by their constant changes to hold both equally light; that, by perceiving that neither can afford us true satisfaction, we may be led to the conviction that our spirits must be born

for a far higher purpose than to be the toys of the varying play of earthly accidents, and that true happiness must consist in far more noble enjoyments than such as our earthly career affords? But where shall we seek for these higher enjoyments, for that unalterable cheerfulness and tranquillity of mind, if they are not to be derived from the circumstances amid which our lot is cast? We must learn to find them in ourselves, in our religious relations to the universe, to the world of spirits, to life here and in eternity, to Christ, and to our Father in Heaven. We must find them in our conviction of the unutterable wisdom and goodness of God, who governs all things; we must find them in the strict fulfilment of all our duties in life, in the exercise of every virtue of which man is capable. The sublime self-consciousness of virtue and innocence is the only source of true, and pure, and lasting happiness.

It is, therefore, a great mistake to suppose that it is easier to find consolation for sufferings brought on by our own fault than for such as we have not merited. Know that there is no more dreadful evil on earth than that which forces man to turn against himself with hatred and contempt.

He whose loved ones are snatched from him by the hand of death, or whose worldly prospects are injured by war, or by the slackness of business, or who is deprived of the world's esteem by the machinations of some malignant fellow-being,—he has lost much, but his self-respect he retains, and with this a feeling

of holy pride in not having merited his adverse fate. He is refreshed by the tear of pity shed for him by strangers, for though it brings no help, he recognizes therein the love of others. His poverty, his abandonment, becomes to him a triumph as it were, and the more so, the less he has contributed to his misfortunes by any fault or imprudence of his own. He says to himself with inward calm: "It is the will of God." "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." The outer man may bend under the weight of his misfortunes, but the inner man will only rise up stronger and nobler than ever, for he will at last have ceased to tremble at fate, he will have learnt to realize that God is with him.

In common life we generally feel more tender pity for those who are suffering without any fault of their own, and less for those who have brought down misfortunes upon themselves. And the cause is a very natural one. In the one case our pity is mixed with love, in the other with contempt and reproaches. Our judgments generally take a judicial form, and pronounce suffering merited when it seems to us to be the just punishment of some great mistake or some evil action; whereas we are deeply pained at the sufferings of those who, if fortune or misfortune were really always meted out as reward or punishment, would have merited a better fate. But if our pity varied in proportion to the real misery of our fellow-beings, we

should certainly pity those the most who are suffering by their own fault. They must always be the truly unhappy ones.

For, in addition to their outward sufferings, they are tortured by an inward pain, the pang of an evil conscience, which the innocent can never know. Those who are the cause of their own misery have lost, as regards the outward world, what they much cherished; but not this alone—with a clear conscience they could easily bear that—they have lost their inward worth, their better selves as it were, and no pain can exceed this. They cannot look upon their sufferings as a triumph, but must regard them as the punishment of their own unworthiness; they cannot rise magnanimously above their trials, but can only impudently and shamelessly feign contempt for them. This forced indifference, however, adds to their misery. In every fellow-man, whom they have reason to suppose is acquainted with their condition, they behold a judge, who pronounces that which is crushing them to the earth, to be a righteous judgment upon them; and even the pity of their fellow-beings brings no consolation with it, for an inward voice is always repeating, I have deserved my fate, I might have been happier had I been more worthy. Even the kindness of heart evinced in the sympathy of their friends, frequently gives additional poignancy to their grief, because it reminds them of how much better the friends are than themselves, or they feel that the pity shown is not so much due to their outward

misfortunes as to the mistakes of their heart and their understanding.

Therefore rise up, O suffering and dejected soul; let it be thy pride that thy misfortunes are not the fruits of thy own transgressions. Thy misery is God's doing; thou couldst do nought to ward it off. Therefore take courage, for in good time God will again relieve thee of thy burden. He is mighty to help, and He will cause a blessing to spring from that which thou now deemest an inexhaustible source of sorrow.

He will not leave thee, nor forsake thee. That which is truly good He has never withdrawn from thee. But take heed that thou dost not leave God, that thou dost not forsake Him! Cling to Him and He will hold thee up with His strong arm. Attach no undue importance to the earthly things that thou hast lost, and thou wilt perceive how much of inward happiness still remains to thee. The dreadful day of thy misfortune was meant to be the commencement of thy inward glorification. For the earthly and transient things to which thou didst cling too fondly, were stripped from thee in order to prove how little enduring are all things here below. In like manner thy earthly covering will be stripped from thee on the day of thy death, that thy glorification may be complete. But begin this glorification now already, that the angel of death may find something to complete. Sanctify thy heart with honesty, truth, courage, love of thy fellow-men, and with every heavenly virtue. Throw off the faults that hinder thy growth in goodness; become a child of

God, and no evil can touch thee, for the Almighty, the Lord of Heaven and earth, will be thy Father.

He is thy Father even now, and for all the earthly goods that thou hast lost He will give thy immortal spirit heavenly compensation. What are the sufferings of this short life, compared to the glories He has prepared for us in a higher existence? Thou wilt not, indeed, find there the earthly happiness which thou hast lost here, but new riches of His grace; and the souls which thou didst love here on earth, oh, they are immortal, like thyself; they will rejoin thee in Heaven, with undiminished love. Everything that we possess on earth is lost to us in death, except the spirits whom we loved; those we shall find again where dwells the Lord of spirits. Amen.

GOD IS MY COMFORTER.

To all my pain and grief,
  Thou, Lord, canst make an end;
When hopeless of relief,
  Thou canst salvation send.

If sorrows overflow,
  Still let Thy will, alone,
In joy alike, or woe,
  In life or death, be done.

As each new morn appears,
  Still may it witness be,
That forced from crushing cares,
  I trust alone in Thee.

(Isaiah liv. 7, 8.)

Life is full of trouble and sorrow. Where is the mortal who can say with truth: "I am exempt from the suffering and tears which are the lot of other men"? Though we may see individuals who are surrounded by abundance, who are glowing with health, who seem to succeed in everything they undertake, whose eyes are ever sparkling with merriment, and who have always a joke upon their lips, do we

know what cares may be brooding in the depths of their minds? Outward gaiety is often but a veil spread over hidden wounds. Who knows what worm may be gnawing at their heart's core?

There are families in regard to whom one is inclined to assert, on first knowledge, that there is nothing left for them to wish for. They have all that they want, and they are rich in all the things that thousands of others stand in need of; but nearer acquaintance, and deeper insight into those circumstances of their lives which they conceal from the vulgar gaze, prove that things are very different from what they seem. In reality, these people are frequently far more unhappy than their neighbours, to whom they are objects of envy. Nay, there are cases in which the happiness apparent on the surface is, in fact, a secret source of many evils.

This is probably the reason that has led numbers of people to believe that life on earth has been destined by God to be to us a life full of tribulation, and has induced them to call the interval between the cradle and the grave a time of hard trial, and the earth itself a valley of tears. But they are greatly mistaken. How, indeed, is it possible to believe that the God of infinite mercy and love has created valleys of tears in His universe?—that He has called beings into existence in order to torture them? Even the most hard-hearted mortal would shrink from such an act, and they dare to attribute such cruelty to the All-holy and All-perfect Being!

It is the same feeling, perhaps, that has induced others to stand up and vindicate the ways of God, in respect of the evils existing in the world. Even pious, Christian scholars have undertaken such justifications of God in deep earnest. Alas! that the creature should deem it necessary to justify the Creator.

Indeed, every cause of consolation presented to the understanding during times of affliction proves of no avail if we have not the most entire and the most hearty trust in God; for, whatever people may teach or preach, misfortune remains misfortune, and grief remains grief, and the sufferings of the heart cannot be healed by the convictions of the understanding. But this I know:—trust in our Father in Heaven lightens the weight of every burden, it strengthens the mind and relieves it of all fear, and disarms the unknown events of the future of all their terrors. He who has real trust in God does not pray: "Father, listen to my wishes! Save for me that which I am threatened with losing," or, "Give back to me that which I have already lost!" Nay, he prays as Christ prayed in the hour of His agony—"Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." (Luke xxii. 42.)

When I think of the infinite majesty of the Lord, who animates thousands and thousands of worlds peopled by myriads of beings created by Him, and who has upheld these from all eternity, so that no sun, and no planet, can move from its appointed orbit; when I think of how unfathomable is that wisdom

which has fashioned the blade of grass and ordered all its inward and outward parts, and which has also fashioned the countless host of stars which is marshalled in the heavens; when I think of the infinite goodness which He evinces towards all His creatures without exception, in all parts of the world, as in the ocean and in the heavens—then I feel that I alone cannot have been forgotten. How can I believe that He who provides for all will fail to provide for me? Should I be able to breathe, should I be still in the world, if, for one moment only, He ceased to uphold me? Nay, even in mine hour of agony, He does not forsake me, He is with me, He the Invisible, All-ruling, All-gracious God. He loves me!

This conviction, this comfort of which nothing can deprive me, comes home to me whenever I think of Him. In face of this, every doubt is silenced, which the imagination, the ill-temper, or the impatience of mortals may raise. He loves me! I know it. He loves me as He loves His entire universe. I know it, and I should know it even had parents and teachers never told me of His love,—even if the entire universe were reduced to silence. Who then has told me of it? My own life tells me of it, and would tell me of it were all other witnesses dumb. Therefore, be of good cheer, my soul!

"For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with ever-

lasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." (Isaiah liv. 7, 8.)

Yes, God is my Comforter at all times, and will be so whatever I may have to endure in this life. For what can happen to me without the will of the Almighty, who pervades all things. And whatever may happen to me, Jesus hath said it: the hairs of my head are numbered! And it is the will of the Infinite Love. If I trust in Him, whatever may befall me will turn to my good.

Oh words full of consolation: "For a small moment I have forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee."

It is true, it is a hard trial for the sufferer, when God seems, if only for a moment, to have averted His face from him, and particularly when he knows that he is not to blame for the sorrows that have come upon him, or when he has unknowingly drawn down upon himself the evils which he most dreaded. But in this latter case, why should he upbraid himself? Why increase his misery by unmerited self-reproaches? None of us can know before-hand the effects of that which we do, or which we leave undone. That which seems perfectly harmless may sometimes produce the most pernicious effects; and that from which we expect the most dangerous consequences may eventually pass off without creating any mischief. Even the wisest and most experienced of men are but short-sighted mortals. The consequences of our acts or of our negligences are in the hand of God, who rules all

circumstances according to His infinite wisdom. It would be childish folly to demand of the Ruler of the universe that He should guide all things according to our pleasure, our insight, and our desires. Though what He does may not always at the moment be according to our wishes, it will infallibly prove to be for our ultimate good. Therefore, let no one grieve over those misfortunes which he has unwittingly brought down upon himself, or which he has not merited. If it could not be otherwise, it was God's will that it should be so. All the reproaches which we heap upon ourselves are only so many more proofs of our ignorance. For just as little as we could foresee the evil consequences of that which we did without any malevolent intention, or perhaps with the best purpose: just as little can we foresee how beneficial to ourselves and even to others may prove those events which we now look upon as misfortunes.

Not only may I involuntarily and unconsciously bring troubles upon myself and others, but the ignorance and thoughtlessness of others may in like manner involve me in the evil consequences of their acts or negligences. A small spark from a light in a neighbour's house may set it on fire, and the wind or the intense heat may send the devouring element into my dwelling also. I may thus lose the half of my property—perhaps the whole—but whom shall I accuse? Who rules the winds, the flames, and the hours? It may happen that the grievances under which some nations are labouring, or the inimical attitude of neighbouring

states, make war inevitable. Whose will rules the issues? Who determines the battle? On what almost imperceptibly small circumstances do not the most momentous results depend? It is possible that the war may bring unlooked-for advantages to me and my family, but it is equally possible that it may deprive us of our all, that it may expose me to the ill-treatment of a rude soldiery, that it may ruin my trade, deprive me of my office, or throw me on a bed of sickness. If so, whom shall I accuse of my misfortunes? Have I any right to despair? Whatever has happened, or may still happen, forms part of the pre-calculated plans of Eternal Providence; and it is the Providence of love that has meted out my share. Any vain repining at what I may have lost, would be like the murmurings of a child against his father, who knows better than he what is good for him; for God knows best what is good for my spirit, for which an endless existence has been prepared in the infinite House of the Father. For such endless existence many preparations may be necessary, the purpose and value of which I cannot understand, because I do not as yet know the goal towards which they are meant to lead. But this I do know, that they will surely guide me to the intended goal, for God lives! God provides! Nothing can take place without the will of the Father!

If life ended here on earth, ah, yes, then everything would become incomprehensible to me, then my unmerited sorrows would rise up in judgment against the

justice of God. But what rational being could entertain so preposterous a thought? And as my mind refuses to believe in such a state of things, it ought not to allow even the most painful ills that can afflict me in this life, utterly to depress it. He who believes only in the present may well despair; but he who knows that the future lies open before him, his hope need never fail. The surgeon who would completely cure some cancerous wound, cuts even into the sound flesh to make sure of extracting the roots, and of restoring perfect health to the patient. Why then despair because of the momentary pain? It is inflicted only that we may be the happier in the long future that is before us. When my dear ones pine away and die—alas! it is a bitter sorrow.—But they did not live for this life alone. It was not bitter to them; and though perhaps they would fain have remained longer with me, they knew not what was good for them. Now, in their glorified state, they triumph over their past errors. Their loss was a keen pang to me, for my heart clung to them with intense affection. But is heart in reality severed from heart? Are they not still living as I am, in the house of our Father? Eternal existence is our lot, how then can I allow myself to be depressed by the present moment? You may, it is true, say to yourself that the life of your dear ones on earth might have been prolonged. But, short-sighted mortals, how do you know whether, had you been capable of tracing all the concatenations of fate, you would have wished to prolong their life? Whatever

God does is well done. Not my will be done, but Thine, O Father!

Even the illness or death of a beloved object is less painful to an affectionate disposition than the grief caused by a faithless friend, who betrays under the mask of love; who has been deluding us, while we have felt perfect faith. What deep affliction also is not that of kind parents who are so unfortunate as to have unworthy, ill-conducted children, when they find that all their watchings, all their tears, all their teachings, all their devotion to the child from its infancy, have been in vain—that all the hopes they so fondly cherished are dashed to the ground—that all the cheerful prospects of their old age are overclouded! Verily, the death of a child, if ever so dearly loved, cannot cause such poignant grief as the sight of one who has gone astray. A thousand times rather the death of an innocent being than a wicked and impious life, hateful in the sight of God and man! Yet such fate ofttimes falls to the lot of the most pious and well-intentioned parents. Though they have neglected neither training nor instruction, according to their light—neither punishment, nor entreaties, nor warnings, nor advice—yet they have been doomed to see their honest endeavours fail. There are but few families of which some member has not gone more or less seriously astray, without any blame attaching to the parents. However hard such misfortune may be for these latter to bear, the thought that they have no cause to upbraid themselves must, in some measure,

diminish their grief. Man's will is free, whether he select good or evil; therefore, parents are not always able to conquer the will and the tendencies of their child, whom God has endowed with freedom of self-determination. But one thing is certain—even those whom we give up for lost are not really so; God will save them. He allows no soul to be given over for ever to perdition. He sends suffering, and the school of trial and training begins. Knowledge will come at last, repentance will follow, and then improvement, however long delayed. Man may stray from the right path, and find himself among thorns and thistles; but he can never entirely lose the way. Sooner or later he is driven back into the true path by the pain caused by his mistake. Yes, the lost ones turn back at last, though often with bleeding feet, and in miserable condition. God takes not pleasure in the death of a sinner, but wills that he shall live. Though we may not see the end here on earth, there is a future beyond this life. Those whom we lament over here below, as lost, we shall embrace with tenfold delight when we find them again redeemed.

Thus God is ever my Comforter; I will not, I cannot despair, however terrible may be the misfortunes that befall me. The Lord will direct all for the best. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies I will gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

I may, then, count upon the everlasting kindness of the All-merciful God, even when, because of my sins, He turns away His face from me in anger, as it were. Ah, how wretched would be the lot of erring man, were his God an unforgiving God! How soon is the false step made, and how dreadful if the error of a moment were to be expiated by an eternity of punishment! But who would attribute to the all-perfect God an amount of cruelty which we should recoil from with horror even in a human being? Far be such thought from me!

I may be made unhappy by my own fault. But the very suffering that is thus entailed on me is a proof of God's love. He has made pain the consequence of sin, in order that we may learn to shun it, and that we may learn to seek again in virtue that union with Him which, in our folly, we have destroyed.

No misfortunes are so great as those we bring upon ourselves by our own fault. That affliction which our conscience tells us is unmerited, is not only bearable, but the consciousness of our innocence almost converts the pain into pleasure, and elevates the spirit above that which seemed destined to crush it.

But suffering reaches its full measure when, in the looks of others, we meet not sympathy and pity, but reproaches and contempt; when instead of consolation we are met with an expression of satisfaction that we have at last reaped the reward of our misdeeds. Yet even such taunting words as these—which can only be uttered by hard-hearted men—are not so bitter

as the reproaches of our own conscience! Woe to him who can derive no consolation from his own heart! And woe to him, when in addition to the painful consciousness that he is suffering by his own fault, that he might have avoided the misfortune that is weighing him down, comes the thought of the Holiness of God, the Righteous Judge.

Yet by far the greater number of misfortunes that befall men are not the results of unavoidable circumstances, but of their own mistakes and misconduct. Impetuosity and imprudence place many a man in difficulties which a little more self-control would have enabled him to escape. But such errors as may be put to the account of the limitations of the human mind do not cause so sharp a sting as those that spring from the perverted state of the heart. He who with malignant intent has endeavoured to injure another, but has injured himself still more; he who digs a pit for another but falls into it himself—from whom shall he seek consolation? The punishment that overtakes him comes from the hand of God, and his conscience tells him that he has deserved even more.

Many persons carry through life an unhealthy body; they are the victims of slow disease, which, to all appearance, can only end in death. They were once in blooming health like others. But they wasted their strength in debauchery, or they injured their health by immoderate work or pleasure. In both cases they have been guilty of intemperance. Or they have perhaps weakened their bodies by effeminate

habits, instead of strengthening them judiciously, so as to enable them to bear changes of weather and temperature. They would not attend to the warnings given, and they lost their precious treasure, health, which they knew not how to value. Other persons are afflicted with bodily sufferings which have been brought on by no fault of their own; but how much lighter must not these be to bear than those for which the conscience tells the sufferer he has to thank himself.

To look upon poverty as a thing to be ashamed of, is folly. Thousands are poor who have every claim to our respect. Nay, many a worthy individual is only the more to be revered because of his poverty. But when a man has ruined his fortunes by his own senseless undertakings; when he has impoverished himself by extravagance, by ostentation, by indolence, or by profligacy: then his poverty becomes a reproach: a just reproach, as he may read in the contemptuous looks of his fellow-men: a righteous punishment, as his conscience will tell him.

Every dereliction reaps its reward. However willing man may be to overlook his own faults, God does not overlook them; sin is inevitably followed by punishment. We may think that we may give ourselves up to this or that passion without danger, but the evil consequences do not fail to present themselves, and sooner or later they destroy us. However cleverly we may conceal our misdeeds, the hour will

come when our cunning will prove of no avail, and our baseness will be divulged to the world.

Alas! these self-inflicted sufferings are the direst evils of our life; and many a heart is secretly tortured by them; many a man is brought to the grave by them, though no eye but that of the Omniscient sees his misery.

But however great may be the anguish of my heart and conscience, I do not despair. Will not the All-merciful One have mercy on me also? Is He not the loving Father of all His creatures, therefore also mine?

Yea, yea! Thou art the merciful God, the Redeemer, and Thou wilt not forsake me. Great is the number of my sins, but Thy mercy is greater still. I am not worthy of the life thou hast bestowed upon me, and which I have sullied with my sins; I am not worthy to behold Thy world, which I have desecrated by my misdeeds. I am not worthy of Thy mercy and Thy long-suffering. And yet, O my Redeemer, I have hope in Thy forgiveness, and Thou wilt not put my hope to shame.

Hast Thou not said it, O eternally good Creator of my soul? Hast Thou not said: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies I will gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on thee." Thou didst love me even when I sinned so gravely against Thee. Wilt Thou love Thy erring child less now that he is being chastened by

suffering? When none else can or will comfort me, Thou remainest ever my Comforter.

He who bled on the cross bled for me also. And it is He who has directed me to seek refuge with Thee in my bitterest agony, and who established the holy covenant which I have broken. "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed," saith Thou, my Lord and Redeemer; "but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." (Isaiah liv. 10.) Thou art the Helper in my need, oh God, and my Comforter at all times.

Have mercy upon me, then, All-merciful God; gather me again unto Thee, and relieve me of my sin. I am expiating it by the agonies of my mind, by the remorse of my conscience; and not by shedding barren tears only, but by performing holy and benevolent acts, will I endeavour to recover my lost peace. This peace, however, I can find nowhere but in Thy grace and favour. Firmly trusting that my sins will be forgiven by Thy eternal love revealed to me through Jesus Christ, I will bear my punishment willingly and patiently, and will cast away whatever may threaten me. Thou leadest all things to good for those who trust in Thee, and walk before Thee in righteousness. Amen.

GOD'S VOICE IN THE HUMAN HEART.

Though all tongues were silent, Lord,
  I should find Thee everywhere;
Sun and moon Thy might record,
  Hill and vale their witness bear.
Earth and Heaven might silent be,
Still my soul should tell of Thee.

In the summer's golden days,
  In the forest's shady night,
In the blue-tongued lightning's blaze,
  In the gleams of starry light,
In the storm that round me breaks,
Father, 'tis Thy presence speaks.

Yes, where'er my way may be,
  Still I hear Thy voice reprove:
"Ah, why persecut'st thou Me,
  In return for so much love?"
No—I'll turn to Thee once more:
Weeping, penitent, adore.

(Acts xxii. 7.)

To every devout reader of the Bible, every lover of the early history of the Christian religion, there is something peculiarly awe-inspiring in the events that led to the conversion of St. Paul. Often have I read

that narrative so full of import, with deep and reflective interest, and never without being strongly moved by it, and reminded of the power of Providence.

In the days when Paul, then still called Saul, was one of the fiercest persecutors of the Christians, there was hardly a Jew who exceeded him in zeal and activity for the suppression of the new doctrine. He forced himself into the assemblies of the Christians, however secret they endeavoured to keep them, to mark the members in order to betray them, and to deliver them up to their persecutors. He himself imprisoned those who believed in Jesus, and ill-treated them. And when the blood of the pious Stephen, the first of the martyrs, was shed, Saul stood by and rejoiced in the death of the innocent man, and took care that his clothes should be kept for those who killed him.

But whatever Saul did against the Christians, he did with the full conviction that he was right. He saw in them only apostates from the old faith; persons who denied Moses and the Prophets; destroyers of the Law delivered to Moses by Jehovah on Mount Sinai; enthusiasts, and lovers of new things.

But one day as he was journeying towards Damascus with the intention of bringing away from that city the adherents of Jesus who had been discovered there and thrown into prison, and of taking them in chains to Jerusalem to be judged by the tribunals there, and when he was not far from Damascus, a great light shone from heaven around him, though it was noon-

day, and he fell to the ground dazzled by its brilliancy. There were others with him, but he alone was so overpowered by the light that he was blinded by it. And he heard a voice saying: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

This vision gave a new direction to Saul's life. His convictions were entirely changed. He recognised the divine nature of Jesus, the Saviour whom he had persecuted: and from that moment he became one of the firmest adherents of the Christian faith. The persecutions which, a short time previously, he prepared for others, he now suffered willingly himself. The tortures, the chains, the imprisonment which he had before inflicted on others, he now bore joyfully himself for Jesus' sake. He was baptized, gave up everything connected with his former state, even laid down the name under which he had proved himself so terrible a foe to the first Christians, and called himself thenceforward Paul.

In like manner as Paul heard the voice of God, so does every human being hear it to this day. It sounds in the ears of each one of us, in louder or gentler tones, in the most decisive moments of our lives, saying: "Why persecutest thou Me?"

Every man and woman has no doubt some wish, for the fulfilment of which they passionately yearn, exerting all their energies to obtain it. The object held in view is not always a noble one; the motive not always so pure as that of Paul, who was only endeavouring to defend the old laws given to the Israelites

on Mount Sinai, against persons whom he considered mischievous innovators. Nevertheless each man labours to reach the goal he has marked out for himself. His attempts prove abortive; but this only spurs him on the more, makes him the more determined to carry his point. While pressing onward, however, he cannot help feeling that something very different from that for which he is labouring must have been ordained by Providence. For the very reverse of that which he wishes, hopes, and expects, is brought about by the course of events. He perceives that his will is not the will of the all-ruling Governor of the World. Nevertheless he will not yield; nevertheless he goes on striving and wrestling, as if his weak arm could subdue the Eternal God, and arrest the progress of mighty destiny. In so doing, however, he is only preparing grievous misfortunes for himself and his family. They fall upon him at last, and then he hears the warning voice: "Why persecutest thou Me?" He halts for a moment in his mistaken career. But the earnest forewarnings contained in events, are in vain—in vain the admonitions of his conscience. He is too proud to give up his plans and to turn back. The violence of his passions carries him on to certain destruction. He sees the abyss before him; but he still deludes himself. He obstinately persuades himself that he can achieve the impossible. At length he reaches the limit which God will not allow him to overstep, and he sinks down, defeated in the fulness of his perversity.

There is not one of us who does not, sooner or

later, in the course of his life, hear the voice of God speaking to his heart; now in soft and gentle accents, now with terrible earnestness.

It seems to rise from the very depths of God's creation, as it lies around us in the splendour of summer, when, oppressed with grief, or full of low passions, and with a distinct consciousness of all our defects and vices, we go forth into the fields and woods where everything—from the dewdrop glittering on a blade of grass, to the stars twinkling in the heavens, from the worm in the dust, to the eagle high up in the air—speaks to us of the goodness, the love, the holiness of the Creator. When, on such occasions, our eye surveys with delight the glory of God in all His works; when a gentle emotion stirs in our bosoms, and an inward feeling tells us how good is God, how sinful we, how pure is all that comes from His hand, how impure our thoughts and aims!—Then a soft, loving voice whispers to the heart, saying: "Why persecutest thou Me?"

When autumn fills our laps with the blessed gifts of the Divine bounty, which has fertilized fields and meadows, and vineyards and orchards, that men and animals might find food sufficient for their needs; and we turn our eyes inward, and see how many sufferers we have with hard hearts refused to comfort, how many tears we have left to flow; when we compare the abundance which God has bestowed on us, with the little we have done to promote the well-being of others, can we fail to feel disapproval of our own conduct? During

such self-examination it is that the voice of God sounds gently and kindly in our hearts, saying: "Why persecutest thou Me?"

Cities and villages are consumed by flames; widows and orphans send forth loud lamentations; sisters and brothers, and little children, weep for the loved ones whom they have lost; the poor take up the wanderer's staff with trembling hands; the wealthy find themselves without a shelter over their heads. This is the power of God manifesting itself! And from amidst the havoc of war, the flames of the cities, and the destruction of the prosperity of mankind, a voice sounds, saying to the human race: "Why persecutest thou Me?"

It is the same awful voice that speaks from out the thunder-cloud, and in the fury of the storm, and awakens the thoughtless sinner to the seriousness of life. It is the same voice which speaks in the flash of the lightning, as it strikes now the palace of the voluptuary, now the hovel of the poor man. It is the same voice that is heard in the murmurs of the dying, when some dreadful epidemic depopulates entire countries. It is this voice that speaks in the roaring wind when it uproots mighty trees, throws down stone walls, engulphs ships in the abyss of the ocean. It speaks—but it is not to the dead it addresses itself. They have been taken away by God. He calls away the righteous as well as the sinner. Death is no evil, however terrible the outward circumstances that accompany it. It is to the living the voice addresses itself, to the living who

are witnesses of the great events, or who are made acquainted with them. The power of the Almighty reveals itself to them in terrific warnings, and saith: "Why persecutest thou Me?"

It happens frequently that some sad calamity overtakes us in the midst of the sweet intoxication of the highest earthly happiness. Ofttimes the object to which the heart clings most strongly, of which we make an idol, is the first to be wrested from us. Ofttimes he is the first to lose his goods and chattels, who has made the accumulation of earthly wealth the object of his life. Ofttimes he is robbed of his honours, who sacrificed every higher duty for the gratification of his pride: he who lived for fame, for the satisfaction of being raised above his fellow-men, of having it in his power to oppress them. Ofttimes those are the first to lose friend, or husband, or child, who, in their love for these, failed to remember that in this life nothing is lasting; that we ought to attach ourselves with the strongest bonds to virtue alone; that though on earth we must live for Heaven; that not what is earthly but only that which is eternal is worthy of true love. And the haggard looks of the covetous, who have lost their all; the fall of the proud man; the stony features of our dead loved ones, speak to us with the voice of God, saying: "Why persecutest thou Me?"

But, can poor weak mortals really persecute God? Or what is meant by persecuting God?

When one man persecutes another, he does so by endeavouring to thwart him in every way, and by

trying to effect exactly the contrary to what the other wills or wishes. Disobedient children persecute their parents when they repay with ingratitude the many benefits bestowed by them; when they embitter the life of those from whom they have received their own life, by hatred, contempt, neglect, and mockery, by their heartless dispositions and impious deeds.

Now, it is indubitably true that mortals cannot persecute God in the same way as they persecute their fellow-men. He is invisible to us. We cannot persecute Jesus as the Jews did, who sought Him out, brought Him before the Judge, insulted Him, and dragged Him to execution. But neither could Paul thus personally persecute Jesus, who had risen from the dead, and had returned to Heaven; and yet the voice from Heaven cried: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

Jesus has said: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." "I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not." It is in vain that, we answer: "Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee?" For the Lord will answer: "Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

You then, who are full of envy and ill-will towards

your fellow-creatures, who disparage them and mock at them, and seek to sully their honour and their good name: it is you who persecute Jesus. You, who are breathing revenge because you have been insulted, or at least fancy yourselves so, and who know no rest until you have inflicted some injury on your opponents: it is you who are persecuting Jesus. You, who oppress the poor, who defraud those who trust you, who retain possession of property that is not rightfully yours, who over-reach the ignorant in business, who injure the rights of others openly or secretly: it is you who persecute Jesus. And you, who selfishly neglect to make others participators in the blessings that have fallen to your lot, and who prefer wasting your superfluity on sumptuous feasts, costly dresses, and expensive amusements, rather than to spend it on undertakings for the public benefit, or rather than take an energetic part in promoting the welfare of your country: it is you who are persecuting Jesus. You, whose dissolute lives are devoted to destroying the peace of innocence, and disturbing the conjugal happiness of others, and end in the destruction of your own mental and bodily strength: it is you who are persecuting Jesus. For whatever you do or leave undone towards others, you do or you leave undone towards Him.

We persecute God when we intentionally show disdain for His holy laws. In like manner parents are persecuted by their children when the latter set at naught the advice and entreaties of father and mother, or proudly deny them before the world, or forget and

neglect them in secret. Every man who lives and acts as if there were no retributive justice above the stars, denies God, if not with his lips, at least in his heart.

"There is a God!" cries the conscience of the sinner. "There is no God!" cry the deeds of the sinner. Though the laws of eternal truth and right are indelibly graven on his soul, he consummates the work of unrighteousness and falsehood. This is denial of God. He enters the temple of the All-high; he sees the Christian congregation sunk in devotion, he hears the preaching of the Holy Word, he hears the recapitulation of his duties, and he returns to his usual ways unaltered and unimproved; he lacks the will to correct his faults, he makes no attempt to render his life more noble than heretofore. This is showing a disdain for the Deity and His laws, which no man can do unpunished. There are moments of solemn emotion, when his heart is touched and softened, when perhaps he has just escaped some dreadful danger, or when he has been surprised by a great and unexpected joy, or when he is stretched on a bed of pain and sickness, or when he is weeping over the corpse of some beloved object—he then feels the power of God, who holds him also in the hollow of His hand. He then remembers his own unworthiness before the All-high, and he hears the voice of God, saying: "Why persecutest thou Me?" He reflects. He repents. He learns to see the nothingness of earthly things, and the necessity of adopting the faith of Jesus—the only faith that has the power of making men happy—and of con-

secrating himself to virtue and to God. He prays. He makes solemn promises. But the moment goes by. The important hour of his life is forgotten. The first excitement of his feelings subsides. He hardly retains a recollection of what has taken place. Speaking of the past, he says with audacious flippancy: "I was a foolish enthusiast at the time," and with that he consoles himself in his degradation. He breaks the promises which he swore before the Omniscient. Again the world becomes more to him than eternity; the judgments of men more than the judgment of God. This is disdain and desecration of the dignity and majesty of the Most High. To any of his fellow-beings, to a prince or to a king, he would perhaps have kept his promise; but to God he breaks it. Before men, the children of the dust, he desires to appear honest; not so before God, the Eternal. The punishments of men he fears: of the retributive justice dealt out by the All-just he has no apprehension.

Even the want of steadfastness of purpose that leads us at one moment to determine to be good, and the next to be guilty of a bad action, is a violation of the profound reverence which we owe to the Lord of our life, the Ruler of the universe. The thoughtlessness with which we give ourselves up to the influence of outward things, and which prevents us from acting ever in strict accordance with duty, and with the exhortations of Jesus, but on the other hand leads us to consult expediency only: this thoughtlessness or levity is an insult to the majesty of God, to whom we refuse

to make any sacrifice if it is to cost the least self-denial, while at the same time we are ready to make the greatest sacrifices for the satisfaction of our sensual desires.

Therefore it is that the voice of God sounds so solemnly in the joyful, as well as in the sorrowful, hours of our life, saying: "Why persecutest thou Me?"

Ah! let every one who understands the cry, turn back. Why do we persecute Him who watches over us with infinite love? Why despise Him who protects and upholds us, and on whose will our very life-breath depends? Why deny Him who reveals Himself to us in the splendours of the universe, in the gifts of nature, in the sorrows and joys of life, and in the innermost depths of our conscience?

Turn back full of repentance, like Paul, when he had heard the warning voice, and like him become, instead of a persecutor of Jesus, one of His most faithful followers and witnesses—his living image in thought, speech, and action. Even this meditation is a call of God to thee, O my spirit, saying: "And thou also, why persecutest thou Me?"

O my Saviour, life of my life, I will no longer be numbered among Thy persecutors. Nay, I will bear in mind that every injury I inflict upon my fellow-men I inflict upon Thy brethren, upon Thyself. I will remember that whatever good I may do in promoting the welfare and happiness of others, Thou wilt accept as if done unto Thee.

Alas! how often, O my God, my Father on high,

how often have I not forsaken Thee, and inclined towards sin! But Thou didst spare me, Thou hadst mercy on me, and yet I forgot Thee, and again forsook Thee. Oh have pity on me; keep not an account of my offences, forgive me, merciful Father, and once more take Thy child into Thy bosom! In spirit I prostrate myself before thine exalted throne, and weep for my sins. But even my scalding tears cannot wash out the stains on my soul. The days of my past life rise up before Thee and accuse me. Ah, forgive, forgive! I will strive to make each of my days henceforward a blessing to myself; so that I may look up to Thee with hope and courage, and say: "Abba, dear Father in Heaven!"

THE DUTY OF SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE.

To Thee, my God, to Thee alone I'll live
After Thy grace, and Thy example strive,
That mirrored in my life, a glimpse of thine,
To all may shine.

And should the world its scorn envenomed fling,
Thy love approving, shall remove the sting:
Who dare declare himself, unknowing Thee,
Thine own to be?

(Matt. v. 15, 16.)

When we occasionally hear of some terrible crime, or some extraordinary act of profligacy, people at once begin to lament over the degeneracy of the times, the decay of morals, the decline in religion. But there is another, and far more striking proof of the common degeneracy, because it hardly admits of an exception, which, however, is passed over in silence. This proof is the fact that but very few Christians have the courage to appear as good and noble as they are or

would wish to be, for fear of being thought ridiculous. Even the common proverb, "You must howl with the wolves when you are among them," confirms the existence of this weakness.

There are few persons—let every one lay his hand on his heart and say whether this be not true—there are few persons who have firmness enough to defy the judgment of the great multitude, when there is a question of carrying out principles to which it is opposed. They do not shrink so much from being wrong as from being ridiculous, and would rather endure the blame of the good, than the sneers of the unworthy. Is not this as much a proof of the weakness of those who, from fear of others, refrain from being as virtuous as they ought to be, as it is of the low tone of public opinion, which laughs at the noblest men as fools and enthusiasts?

Thou art surrounded by a society composed of unprincipled profligates. Youth, fortune, and high spirits, entitle thee and invite thee to take part in their pleasures. Thou art sometimes shocked by the immoral tone of their conversation; at others, by their intemperance in pleasure, and their sins against good manners; but hast thou the courage to express thy disapprobation, and thus to make thyself the target of their wit and their ridicule?

Thou hast often found thyself in the midst of a circle of people more or less known to thee, in which the animated conversation has suddenly turned upon the virtues or defects of certain persons. Heartless

scandal soon reared her head, and the good name of some worthy man was sacrificed for the sake of a witty phrase; or the innocence of a pure reputation was rendered suspicious. Perhaps thou knewest at the time how untrue were the words spoken by the laughing lips of malice; but hadst thou sufficient moral firmness to abide by thy better conviction, and to stand up for the person attacked, and to oppose the slanderer? Lay thy hand upon thy heart and ask thyself, how often thou didst acquiesce against thy better judgment in order to conform to the tone of those around thee; how often thou hast transgressed a sacred duty in order not to lose thy reputation for politeness.

In pulpits and on platforms we may perhaps still hear the noble word, *patriotism;* but how many are there who would not feel embarrassed to take an unusual step, or to make an unusual sacrifice out of patriotism, or who would venture in society to urge others to noble deeds for the sake of their common country? However good and useful an undertaking may be, every one hangs back from being the first to enter upon it. They fear lest they should be called foolish or pharisaical, or be considered ambitious enthusiasts, or virtuous knights-errant. They wait to see what others will do, and call that modesty, which, in reality, is but the effect of sensitive vanity.

Nay, that is not true Christian modesty which makes us ashamed of doing the good we feel the power and the inclination to do. That is not Christian

modesty which makes us prefer to take part in senseless and unworthy proceedings, rather than to make ourselves conspicuous by refusal. It is false shame, it is a betrayal of virtue, it is self-desecration ; thou placest the opinion of erring mortals higher than the truths taught by Jesus, thy divine Master ; thou hast more respect for the judgment of the world than for the judgment of God ; thou wouldst serve two masters, and betrayest them both.

That true modesty which is the highest ornament of a Christian, never makes a show of virtue ; but it never sacrifices what is right to the opinion of fools. Modesty prefers doing good in secret and silence, but it does not refuse to do what is right because it must be done in public. It has no desire to win fame by its actions ; and therefore it has the courage to bear scorn and ridicule if need be.

The true follower of Jesus confesses Him openly. A friend who, though he calls himself so in secret, blushes to own me in public, must always be suspicious in my eyes. He cannot be sincerely my friend. And thus, likewise, he is not a Christian, not a true follower of Christ, who is timid enough to deny Him by word and action before the world. "Whosoever shall confess Me before men," said Christ to His disciples when preparing them for going into the world, "him will I confess also before My Father, which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father, which is in Heaven."

To act rightly and in strict accordance with principle, at all times and under all circumstances, without reference to the opinions or the sarcasms of the vulgar multitude, is a very different thing from acting in accordance with pharisaical pride.

The Pharisee, it is true, also does good in public, but he does it, not from a pure sense of duty, but from selfish motives. He makes a boast of virtue which does not dwell in his heart. He speaks the truth, but not so much out of love as out of hatred. He gives alms to the poor, but he is not actuated by real charity, but by the desire to gain the approval and esteem of the world. He readily undertakes to support public institutions, and promote the general welfare, but with the hope of winning the favour of the great, and of fixing the eyes of the people upon himself. It is not virtue he aims at, but rewards, honours, higher offices, or more extended influence. Though he preaches charity in public, he works in secret at the downfall of his rival; though he declaims in public against the prevalent immorality, he satisfies in secret his lusts and his love of revenge: he, who in church, or at the theatre, or when reading, or listening to a touching narrative, sheds tears of sympathy and pity, nevertheless allows himself to cheat widows and orphans out of their money, or to neglect property entrusted to him, or to plunge some poor family into ruin, because they will not do his bidding.

How far more exalted is the mind of the true follower of Jesus! He strives for virtue, not for the

mere appearance of it; he looks to the act, not to the fame that is to be gained by it. He does his duty, even should the world condemn him. He walks in the path of righteousness, even though it lead to tribulation, as Jesus Christ walked courageously in the path that led to the cross!

The truly wise and virtuous man must not only do his duty in secret as well as before men, but in addition to this, he must seize joyfully every occasion of influencing others by his example, and of inciting them to generous and noble thoughts and deeds.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven," is the command of the Divine Founder of our religion.

By setting an example of goodness, we are to encourage others to act in like manner. This is a duty the more incumbent on every righteous man in the present day, as it is becoming more and more common to be ashamed of one's virtues as well as of one's faults; as it is considered a merit to wrap oneself in impenetrable mystery, and dignified to assume an amount of reserve which makes it impossible for any one to know what we really are. Where such a tone reigns in society, it is easy for a bad man to pass himself off for good; for how is the one to be distinguished from the other? Where this concealment of one's true views and opinions has come to be considered as a mark of good breeding, there artful hypocrisy must rank higher than truth, appearances must be placed above

reality, and conventionality above piety and cordiality. One man must be like another; all must be, more or less, masters in deception; all must be, more or less, the slaves of secret selfishness.

It is the duty of every Christian—of every wise man—to avoid all artful and unworthy submission to established custom. For a man is very apt to become in reality what, at first, he only gives himself the appearance of being, and habit soon becomes second nature.

But this duty is doubly urgent and solemn when we live in times in which vice assumes fine names, and walks barefaced through the streets. Place the example of God-fearing virtue boldly before the eyes of the people, when the brazen villain dares to flaunt his baseness in the open day. Let thyself be known as a man faithful and true to his word, and inspire the weak by thy heroic example, while others toy with their oaths, and represent treachery as prudence. Show thyself in thine innocence and thy stern morality in the midst of those who call laxity of morals amiable tolerance, and who find excuses for adulterers. Vice seduces, virtue inspires, by example. Thou wilt not long stand alone. The respect of the high-minded will surround thee, though sinners will avoid thee.

It is the duty of every Christian, and of every wise man, to be a light in the path of his fellow-men; for a thousand excellent maxims will not touch the heart as much as one example of a just and noble deed. It is by His example that the World-Redeemer has set a

light before us. He would not have been the Saviour of the world, had He not had the courage to die on the cross for the redemption of mankind. Had He not inspired His disciples with equal fortitude, neither they nor the martyrs of the primitive Church would, for the sake of His Word, have borne death and shame so joyfully. Hell would have triumphed, heathendom would have conquered, eternal truth would have died with the lips that first preached it.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works," cries Jesus Christ; and He acted in accordance with His words. This exhortation to Christian heroism goes forth to the high as well as to the low—to the young as well as to the old. We are therfore called upon *intentionally* to do the good which we do in public.

There is, however, no iudication in the exhortation that we are to push ourselves forward, and to endeavour to attract to ourselves and our actions the attention of all. Nay, we know that nothing has less effect upon the hearts of others than conduct adopted for mere example's sake. Such far-sought opportunities for exhibiting ourselves from an advantageous point of view, destroy the effect the good might otherwise produce; as, under such cirumstances, the actors seldom escape a suspicion of being incited by secret vanity. It is not the good deed alone that is to be imitated, but the disposition from which it springs. Indeed, there is no necessity for our anxiously seeking opportunities for setting a good example, for God will not fail to

provide numerous occasions on which we may manifest our inward worth and our highest convictions. Set an example of forbearance when the negligence or malignity of others rouses thee to anger. Set an example of generosity when thou hast an opportunity of humiliating thine enemy. Set an example of fidelity when others, with easy pliancy, conform to circumstances, and break their oaths with a mere shrug of the shoulders. Set an example of noble steadfastness when seduction ventures to approach thee with flattering tongue, and endeavours to undermine thy virtue. Set an example of patient resignation to the will of God when thy wealth melts away, when thy loved ones die, when friends turn their backs upon thee because fortune has deserted thee.

We shall never lack opportunities in social life of standing forward as upright men or women. Let us but have the courage to prove ourselves to be Christians by word and deed, in public as in secret, and we shall have set a good example.

The duty of setting a good example is the more obligatory when we hold a position in society which makes us objects of general attention. Thus the responsibility of the father is greater than that of his child; more is expected from rulers than from subjects; more from the rich than from the poor; more from the cultivated than from the ignorant. The wider the sphere of thy influence, the more powerful is the example of thy virtues, the more seductive the example of thy vices. Thou dost not live and act for

thyself alone—thy virtues illuminate, thy vices darken the world around thee.

The example of virtue is the more attractive when it is set forth in acts the performance of which involves a sacrifice. Therefore Christ pointed out to His disciples the poor widow, who modestly approached the treasury, and put in the mite which she had perhaps saved up by the greatest self-denial.

When an enervated old man shuns the follies of youth; when persons in pecuniary distress avoid extravagance; when the naturally tender-hearted abstain from cruelty, or gentle dispositions refrain from anger—how can we look upon them as offering an example for imitation, or what claims have they on our admiration?

But when a youth, in the full strength of his years and passions, shows by his conduct that frivolity is hateful to him; when he turns away with disgust from the allurements of luxury and sensual gratifications; when he joyfully submits to the severe discipline of labour and order, though he is not insensible to the pleasures of life—he excites, with justice, the admiration of his fellow-men, and the desire of his young companions to follow his example.

Therefore, let each one of us endeavour to set an example in those virtues which are the least expected of us. Let the warrior who hastens to the battle-field, whither duty towards his sovereign and his country call him, set a brilliant example of humanity. Let him spare the unarmed, and protect the helpless against

the cruelty of his more brutal companions; let him save the property of his enemy from the hands of the rapacious, and defend innocence against the attacks of lawless violence.

Let him who stands high, and who possesses fame, and power, and splendour, set an example of modest simplicity. Let him prefer the calm consciousness of having done his duty, to the flattery of base self-seekers. Let him honour even the humblest of his subordinates, as a man and a brother.

Let him on whom God has bestowed unusual capacities, who has acquired the fame of possessing great knowledge and high culture, set a noble example of respect for religion. He is looked up to by the rude multitude. Let him by his example lead them to reverence for what is holy, and for the time-honoured institutions which have been founded for the moral and religious instruction of the people.

Let the rulers of the people, and the magistrates and judges set the example of implicit obedience to the laws; let them avoid even the appearance of making any exceptions in their own favour, where they might do so. Let them honour every good citizen; let them not judge according to the person; nor allow themselves to be influenced by party feeling or family affection, so as to be hostile to one because he belongs to an opposite party, and to favour another because he is a relative, to the detriment of persons of higher merit.

Let the wealthy set an example of wise simplicity of

life, and the rich of humility. Let them prefer the fame of having saved an unhappy family from ruin to that of giving the most luxurious dinners. Let them put less store on the possession of expensive furniture, but go forth into the dwellings of poverty and soothe the last moments of some wretched sufferer. Let them clothe themselves and their families in less costly apparel, in order that they may have the means of giving the needy warm raiments. Let them desist from the pleasures of the card-table, in order that they may prepare a life of happiness for some poor orphans.

Let the citizen of humbler estate set the example of a refinement of feeling which revolts against ignoble and low pleasures, and prefers such as spring from the cultivation of the mind. Let him ennoble his condition by honesty in his trade, and order in his household, by good manners and modest dignity of deportment. Let no word of hateful and contemptible professional envy be heard under his roof; but let him be content with his position, and without pride or defiance raise himself by his honourable character and acquirements to a level with the best among the people.

Let the teachers of the religion of Jesus set the sublime example of tolerance towards other sects and religions; let them hate men's vices, not their faith; but let them by the victorious power of their example inspire others with the Christian virtues.

And let it be my aim also, thus to help to spread the kingdom of God on earth. Alas! how little have

I hitherto contributed towards this; how often has not the prevailing tone of society made me swerve in my noblest intentions; how often have I not been embarrassed when I have been called upon to let my light shine before others; how often have I not been ashamed of my best feelings, of my uprightness, and my piety, because I feared the ridicule of the vulgar herd!

But henceforth it shall be otherwise. Hereafter I will not deny my Jesus and His followers. I will confess *Thee* before men, O Divine Saviour of my soul, as Thou wilt confess *me* before Thy Father. What is my aim on earth? Is it merely to please worldly-minded men? Nay, O Father, above all it is to make myself worthy of Thee. I live not for the fleeting dream of a few years, but for eternity.

Though the scoffers may smile at my leaving the beaten track; though men, who know no other world than the narrow field of their earthly circumstances, may misjudge me, I will have the courage to be good, and will set an example to others in all such virtues as may perhaps prove most difficult to myself to perform.

Ah! what happiness would it not be to find that I have influenced others for good; that by my example I have led others to embrace virtue, to choose eternal bliss! I may do this, and I will do it; for what can prevent me but my own weakness! Amen.

SINS OF OMISSION.

Father of every soul, how deep
  Our sins, how oft we fall!
Ah! who the record dread can keep?
  Who, Lord, can count them all?
How oft do we forget Thee, Lord,
Thy love so fatherly, Thy word,
    The dignity of life!

Who his own sinful heart that knows,
  Unshamed Thy face can greet?
Who shrinks not from Thy light, nor bows
  With trembling, lest he meet
The judgment that his thoughts confess
Thy might demands, Thy holiness—
    Who can before Thee stand?

Not one—and this Thy pity moves;
  Thou will'st that we shall live,
Not die—and guard'st us with Thy love,
  And wilt with joy forgive.
To Thee, who hast the power, the will,
We pray with tears for mercy still,
    Oh pardoning Comforter.

(James iv. 17.)

When we speak of the value of other men, when we praise the goodness of persons more or less known to us, how uncertain is not frequently the

standard by which we measure them! Nay, even respecting our own worth we often form the most erroneous notions, because we compare ourselves with others whom we know to have been guilty of some special fault or other, and in so doing we are penetrated, if not by that pharisaical pride which Jesus so strongly condemned, yet by a feeling akin to it, and which makes us inclined to say: "I thank Thee, my God, that I am not like one of these!"

We generally deem ourselves justified in considering any person as below us in worth, who has committed some fault of which we have not yet been guilty; which in our actual circumstances and frame of mind we are not tempted to commit; or which, in our special position, we could not commit. But are we therefore better than he who has erred in this direction?

There are undoubtedly persons who, in their own way, and judged according to the circumstances amid which they are placed, are more pure and virtuous minded than I am, yet who have been guilty of some gross misdemeanour which has justly brought down upon them the contempt of their fellow-citizens, and the punishment of the law. Their education, their temperament, and various other causes have perhaps led them, in violation of their better will, to commit offences of which our education, our temperaments, and surrounding circumstances render it quite impossible that we should be guilty. But are we therefore better than they? Have we been exposed

to powerful temptations, and victoriously proved the strength of our principles in spite of the force of outward allurements, and of the excitement of inward

How often do we not condemn with hard-hearted severity some unhappy criminal who, in a fearful moment of uncontrollable violence, has become a murderer, and has with perfect justice been seized by the officers of the law and punished accordingly! He has become a murderer, and yet, except in this point of his unconquerable passion, he was perhaps one of the kindest, most benevolent of men. He has deserved his punishment, no doubt; nothing can justify or excuse the terrible deed he committed; his deep-felt repentance cannot undo what has been done. But am I a better man than he, because as yet I have no murder on my conscience? Can I, in the depths of my heart, praise my own moderation and gentleness, when perhaps these supposed virtues spring solely from my natural timidity and indolence?

How often is some fallen maiden spoken of with a malignant sneer, or with proud disdainful pity, while her stern judges hug themselves with satisfaction, thanking God that they are not as she! Yet, O relentless sister! perhaps the unhappy one whom thou so greatly despisest was more chaste in heart than thou. Perhaps she loved virtue more earnestly and deeply; perhaps she has sustained more conflicts with passion —conflicts which the eye of the Almighty alone witnessed—until in some unhappy moment, forgetful

of herself and of all that is holy and pure, she succumbed. Thou, O severe judge of thy erring sister, thou mayst indeed boast of never having been guilty of any serious false step; but canst thou put down this to thine own merit? Wert thou ever placed in a position to have such dangerous feelings awakened in thee? Is it thy love of virtue that has kept thee in the right path; or is it merely fear of danger, or perhaps even want of opportunity that has saved thee? Have thy heart and thy imagination never been polluted?

When the adulteress was brought before Jesus Christ, He, instead of condemning her, exclaimed: "Let him who feels himself guiltless throw the first stone!" And ought we not in the present day to recall to mind these words whenever some erring fellow-creature is made known to us, and his fault is brought into the broad light of day, while the knowledge of our errors lies hidden in the secret recesses of our own hearts? We must not consider ourselves to be more perfect, merely because we have never as yet drawn upon ourselves the attention of the world by some grave offence, or some striking criminal act.

It is true that, in common life, those are termed good, and are considered persons of unblemished reputation, who have no decided blot upon their character; and many no doubt think that it is sufficient merit to be able to assert that no one can bring a complaint against them; and believe that this gives them a claim upon the esteem of their fellow-citizens.

But is it really a merit not to be a criminal? Is the wealthy man deserving of praise because he is not a thief or a robber; or is the enfeebled old man praiseworthy because he is not a seducer of innocence; or the timid man, because he is not a bully and an assassin? Can we appear before God with light hearts, feeling sure of His approbation, when we can say no more in our own favour than that we have not deceived or betrayed others; that we are not drunkards, or slanderers? Are acts which we have not committed really actions? And can we demand to reap where we have not sown?

Nay, do not deceive yourselves. God cannot be mocked! Our duty is not to do the least possible evil, but the most good possible. "That servant," says Christ, "which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luke xii. 47.) To have omitted to do the good which we have it in our power to do, is in itself a crime. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James iv. 17.)

The greater number of mortals being only intent upon securing earthly advantages—thinking merely of their houses, their comforts, their amusements—never rise above the vulgar or the commonplace. No one can with right allege anything against them, they say; but just as little can their own consciences commend them. They are far too timid and too indolent to do evil; but they are equally timid and indolent in regard

to doing what is right and good. They think that they have done as much as can be expected from them when they have helped to carry out some work of benificence, which they have taken part in either because it was in accordance with their temperament, or to escape from *ennui*, or from a desire to win the approbation of others. Alas! this is not virtue. These people are, on the contrary, poor, contemptible sinners; for they have never made an effort, and have only done that which, for many reasons, they could not help doing.

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin!" Such is the word of God.

Every human being who has reached years of discretion, knows the duties that are incumbent on him. Even if he have neither father nor mother, nor teacher, to impress upon him his duties towards God, towards his fellow-men, and towards the animals, a voice will awaken within him that will tell him what is right and what is wrong. Go forth into the most distant regions of the world inhabited by men, however rude and barbarous they may be, you will find that they know how to distinguish between right and wrong. For the Deity reveals Himself in the reason and inner consciousness of all men, so that no one can excuse himself, and the Christian least of all. Because that which is perhaps but a dim and vague conception in the mind of the barbarous heathen, Jesus has placed before His followers in language of unequalled lucidity. We know the words in which He revealed to us the

holy will of our Creator; we know His life, so full of innocence, justice, love, and self-sacrifice for the welfare of man: it is a mirror held up to us, that we may conform ourselves to the image therein. How then can we excuse ourselves with ignorance, when we fail to do the good on earth that we have the power to do?

Nor can any one complain with justice that he lacks opportunities for performing meritorious acts, and for being useful to his fellow-creatures; for not a day passes without many such occasions occurring, had we but strength and courage to avail ourselves of them.

It is true, we may not be able to carry out all the good which we may wish to effect; but let us beware not to fix our attention so exclusively on the aim which we cannot attain, that we neglect that which lies nearer to us, and which we may accomplish with far smaller means. It is a common fault with many to look far beyond their appointed sphere of activity, and to deplore that they cannot engage in this or that benificent undertaking, because their circumstances will not admit of it; or that they are not in the place of some other person, in which case they would be so much more useful and active.

Confine your views to your own sphere: it is wide enough to allow free scope to your piety and to all your virtues. Say not, were I as rich as such a one, I would make a more worthy use of my money. If so, why dost thou not make a more worthy use of the smaller means that are at thy command? Thou

hast sufficient to allow of thy giving away a considerable portion of it without injuring thyself and thy family. Why dost thou not at least supply such small superfluity as thou hast, to assuage the sufferings of others, instead of using it to increase thine own comforts, to swell the number of thy amusements, to gratify thy palate with better wines and more expensive viands? Or if thy circumstances be so restricted that thou canst not spare anything for others, hast thou not the power of speech? Hast thou no wealthy acquaintance, from whom thou mightest, by exerting thyself a little, obtain help for those that need it? It is always easier to speak for others than to speak for ourselves.

Say not, had I the power of the great sovereigns, I would give to the world the peace it is sighing for; I would restore amity, well-being, and concord among nations. For why dost thou not carry out such praiseworthy work within thine own sphere? Why dost thou not make peace with thine own enemies? Why dost thou so proudly refuse to offer thy hand in reconciliation to those who have offended thee? Why dost thou not resist the temptation to scoff at the failings of others, which causes so much ill-will? Why art thou so weak as to hold thy peace when others are spoken ill of in thy presence, or to look with indifference at the misunderstandings existing among thy acquaintances, instead of endeavouring to persuade the angry friends to be mutually indulgent and forgiving? Or why dost thou even encourage them in their hard judgments, or

by carrying tales between them, widen the breach that separates them?

Say not: had I chosen this or that profession, did I hold this or that office, how active, unwearying, and useful should I not be! But in my present vocation I am hampered, and am not able to do one-thousandth part of that for which I feel the capacity within me. Why art thou not then, with this superior capacity, the foremost of all in thy narrower sphere? Why dost thou not prove by the way in which thou fillest the place thou occupiest that thou art worthy of a wider field of action? He who knows not how to make his one talent productive, why should he have more entrusted to him? But if thou hast once attained the highest degree of perfection in thy trade or thy profession, how easy will it not be for thee to extend thy useful activity far beyond its limits?

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

There is no human being who may not find each day of his life at least *one* opportunity of doing good. This is true, even of the beggar in the street. But in order to discover this opportunity, we must be intent on doing so. Unfortunately, this is what we are not. And this is omitting to do good. Do not therefore accuse Providence of having placed thee in circumstances in which thou hast no opportunity of exercising thy virtues. Rather accuse thine own indifference, which prevents thee from opening thine eyes and seeing what lies nearest to thee.

It is not opportunities, but the most essential qualities for doing good which lack thee, namely, sincere love of your fellow-creatures, and a true desire to be useful. He who possesses these, will not fail to discover some means of doing a kind service to every one with whom he comes in contact, and even to be useful to the absent. He will always be able to save something from his necessities to help others, or to promote some public undertaking for the general welfare; and if he have not money to bestow, he will at least give kind words, good advice, and comfort and consolation where needed.

Ask thyself in the quiet of the evening, after each day's work: "Hast thou done all the good that thou mightest have done? Hast thou fully availed thyself of every little opportunity offered thee, to exercise thy virtues?" And if thou dost not remember that any such have occurred, then ask thyself this one question more: "What should I have done under the circumstances had I desired to be a pattern of benevolence and kindness?" Thy conscience will then perhaps reply, "And thou hast not done it!" "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

And the easier it would have been for us to do the good which we have omitted, the greater is our sin in the eyes of God, the incorruptible Judge of our worth, and the greater also in the judgment of our own conscience. For not only is every mortal endowed with a knowledge of what is right, but each one has an especial aptitude for some particular virtue.

He who is by nature tender-hearted and full of feeling, can have no difficulty in performing the noble duty of showing sympathy with, and pity for, the unfortunate. Why then does he not cultivate this divine instinct of his heart? Why does he even do violence to it by endeavouring to smother its utterances? Alas! at one moment he is held back from performing some act of kindness by vanity, by fear of what others will say; at another moment he is prevented by his love of ease from visiting the homes of the poor of whom he has heard, or from obtaining further information as to the best means of helping them out of their misery. At another time it is unpardonable levity that interferes with the fulfilment of his duty; and then again, it is his love of luxury which absorbs the means with which others might have been helped.

He who is by nature courageous and determined, cannot find it difficult to adopt the cause of the oppressed. Why then does he, being an enemy of all injustice, act so little in accordance with his noble disposition? Alas! it is self-interest which causes him to be silent in spite of his better feelings; it is all kinds of considerations for persons whose favour he would be sorry to lose, which induce him to allow injustice to pass for justice.

For him who enjoys general esteem, and who exercises an influence over the opinions and the will of his fellow-citizens, it must be an easy matter to start or to promote numerous undertakings in regard to which others, with their best will and utmost endeavours,

could effect nothing. The mere expression of his approbation, a single word of encouragement from him, will often suffice to accomplish a useful object. Why then does he not speak the word? Alas! because after all he is indifferent to the matter, and he would not take the trouble to reflect upon its importance; or because his indolence is satisfied with the counter question: "Why should I mix myself up with things that do not concern me?" Or, because the undertaking would only be of importance to a stranger, or to a city or village with which he has no connexion.

He is doubly responsible who not only omits to do the good which he has frequent opportunities of effecting, but also that which his natural capacities, and the means he possesses render it especially easy for him to accomplish. In such cases the neglect of the higher duty evidently springs from some vice which has grown strong within him, whether its name be self-seeking, self-love, envy, pride, or indolence, frivolity, or thoughtlessness.

Thou lovest those who love thee, and who flatter thee; thou doest good unto them from whom thou expectest services in return. What merit is this? Do not the heathens as much, and even the animals? Jesus Christ hast taught thee higher duties, and if thou failest in these, oh! do not flatter thyself that thy heart has any real worth! Thou dost not commit crimes, thou dost not deceive, slander, steal, or persecute thy fellow-men. But what merit is this? Even the dead stone that thou strikest with thy foot does not this.

How poor wilt thou not be, O unhappy mortal, when thy undying soul, gifted with great capacities for a higher and eternal existence, with knowledge of truth and falsehood, with a strong will to effect what it wishes, shall be called to render its account, and can boast of nothing more than of having remained unsullied by gross crimes? Can the unfeeling stone lay claim to the bliss of Heaven; and can the indolent servant, who has buried his master's talent in the earth, expect to be entrusted with more?

How poor wilt thou not find thyself, unhappy man, when thy fearful self-deception ceases! Thou thinkest that though not graced with many virtues, thou art nevertheless pure from any great wrong; but see the innumerable occasions on which thou hast omitted to do what thou knewest to be right and good are so many sins for which thou art answerable. The solemn hour will one day strike, when thou wilt shudder at thine own indifference in regard to all this good that has been left undone; for indifference towards a virtue which we had it in our power to exercise, is indifference towards eternity, in which retribution will be meted out to thee; indifference towards the God of Holiness. Every opportunity to do good which presents itself to us is, as it were, an invitation from God to our hearts, to devote themselves to Him—a prayer of our good Angel that we will become more godlike.

And woe is me, how shall I stand before Thee, O Heavenly Father, when my days and hours, and my many sins of omission are counted up before Thee?

However great may be Thy mercy, what hope can I have of a higher existence and higher happiness, when I have wilfully neglected to establish my claims?

I confess before Thee my weaknesses and my shortcomings. Yea, I am a sinner, and a far greater sinner than I often thought I was. My sins of omission are the crimes that weigh me down, and I cannot justify them before Thee.

But my life is not yet at an end. All-merciful God, thy long-suffering still bears with thine unworthy child. I have, perhaps, before me a long series of days, during which I may show more than barren repentance, during which I may give proofs of a will stronger in virtue and more pleasant in Thy sight. My life is not yet at an end, and henceforward I will look joyfully for every opportunity that may occur for me to contribute to the welfare and happiness of others, be it by word, by deed, or by feeling. O Father, Thou dost not demand more of Thy children than they can perform! Why then should I not gladly do all that my strength will admit of? Ah! forgive my many sins of omission! Father, forgive us our trespasses! Amen.

MAN, THE AUTHOR OF HIS OWN FATE.

How often is the bliss
  God-given, thrown away;
How often do the lusts
  Of flesh, to sin betray;
While still unwarned, the foot
  Shuns not the serpent's sting
That pierces though unseen,
  Hidden where flowerets spring.

What noble is, and good,
  What can my brethren serve,
What on the path of life
  Can best from falls preserve;
What good men honour most,
  Gives strength in sorrow's hour,
Is worth my earnest search,
  And lies within my power.

(1 Cor. iii. 6—9.)

Were not all human beings convinced that they may by forethought and judgment establish their own happiness, they would make no effort to improve their condition on earth, but would sit down patiently and expect everything from the favour of Heaven. However, without labour there is no reward; without

trouble no gain, and dangers surround us which only prudence can avert.

The wisdom of God has ordained, that man shall not live in a state of indolent helplessness. Therefore has he been endowed with free will to do as he listeth, and with understanding to discriminate and to choose what is best. Nay, divine wisdom even drives him by the hard law of necessity to conquer his indolence, and to prepare for himself a happier condition through the exertion of the capacities with which he has been gifted. To the beasts of the fields Providence has given raiment of hair and wool; the birds it has clad in feathers to protect them against the inclemencies of weather and temperature; but man it has left bare and naked. So also the animals have been provided with natural weapons of defence against their enemies, with rare strength and wonderful swiftness, while man has received nothing from nature wherewith he can defend himself against the horns of the bull, the strength of the lion, the claws of the tiger, or the fangs of the serpent. She has, however, given him understanding and reason; that he may invent and provide his own raiment, his own weapons, and everything that he requires. She has forced him to exert his mental powers, in order to gain the mastery over the animals; to win from the barren earth the means of nourishment; and not only to build for himself, in common with his fellows, houses, villages, and fortified towns, but to devise laws and regulations which may ensure peace and harmony, and security to all.

Now, as it is the Divine will that every human being should by the use of his understanding and his other faculties prepare his own fate in this world, we cannot but look upon that trust in God as blind and exaggerated, and that piety as very inert, which induces men to lay down their work in the hope that God will not fail to provide what is good and necessary for them. It is indolent piety to believe that we can effect everything by prayers and church-going, and that we may exclusively by the grace of God, or what men term a lucky chance, attain to riches, honours, and consideration. It is false confidence in God to believe that, in order to be pleasant in His sight, and to become a participator in eternal bliss hereafter, it is sufficient to rely upon the death of Jesus, on the mercy of God, and on the prayers of saints and other men; and that it is by no means necessary to lead a life of strict duty, rich in every virtue, and in acts of private and public beneficence.

Nay, it was not without a purpose that the Creator bestowed upon us such varied faculties. He who neglects to use these neglects the talent intrusted to him, and his perversity will bring destruction on himself.

But just as senseless as it is to expect everything from God and nothing from ourselves; rather to await the good fortune that may befal us by some incalculable concatenation of circumstances than to prepare comfort for ourselves by industry, order, and economy: just as foolish is it, on the other hand, to rely exclu-

sively on our own strength, and to expect nothing from the grace of God. How poor are we not if He be not with us! How helpless, if He doth not give His blessing to our endeavours, that is to say, if He doth not so guide all circumstances that that which our industry accomplishes, or our thoughts invent, may turn out advantageous for us! In vain may the husbandman till his field in the sweat of his brow: rain, wind, and hail-storms may pass over it with devastating power. In vain may we have laid plans for our happiness: other persons may come between us and our objects, and without being aware of it, destroy all our prospects. Hence the old and well-known proverb: Man proposes, God disposes!

The most important events in our lives are frequently the consequences of circumstances on which we had least of all calculated; and such things as we have spent much trouble upon as frequently bring us no advantage. Yea, the fate of battles, the fate of large empires, has often depended upon the smallest so-called accident, which has defeated all the calculations of men.

Our will, our strength, and our judgment are in our own power, but circumstances are in the power of God alone; and through these He governs the fate of men—through these He blesses or renders futile their endeavours.

How then can we say that man is the author of his own fate? Are these meaningless words? They are so, if by our fate we mean matters which are beyond our control; if we fancy that our power can effect

impossibilities. As impossible as it is for a mortal to stretch forth his hand and stay the sun in its course, or guide the stars, just as impossible is it for him to determine the wills, the thoughts, and the actions of all his fellow-men in accordance with his own purposes and to his own advantage. These things lie beyond the sphere of his power. But then his real fate is not dependant upon them, but merely the state of his physical being, of his fortune, and of his social relations. He whose happiness is entirely founded upon such outward events, has built it upon a very frail foundation indeed. He will ever be the victim of changing circumstances, which at one moment raise him up, and at another lay him low.

It is not man's physical being, or whatever has reference to that, which is the most important, but his spirit and all that relates to this. But the realm of the spirit does not extend beyond its own self; and when the spirit speaks of a fate of which it is the author, it speaks of that which relates to itself exclusively, and not of that in which it has only a share as long as it is clad in an earthly covering. To say that the human spirit is the author of its own fate means, therefore, that it has the power to be happy, independently of outward circumstances.

It has this power, for God has endowed it with free will, and with the requisite perceptions and strength. For the acquisition of outward means and outward happiness He has given it the capacity that

is developed by experience; for the establishment of permanent inward happiness, He has given it the wisdom of Jesus. The former changes according to circumstances; the latter is unchangeable, and is ever guided by the eternal laws of God.

To these laws of the Deity belongs the rule which prevails throughout life and throughout the universe: THAT GOOD IS INVARIABLY FOLLOWED BY GOOD CONSEQUENCES, AND EVIL IS AS INVARIABLY FOLLOWED BY EVIL CONSEQUENCES, AND ULTIMATELY LEADS TO ITS OWN DESTRUCTION. Good is the will of God revealed to us through Jesus; evil is the setting aside of what is truly good, for the gratification of sensual desires.

He therefore who always wills and does what is right, is the creator of innumerable good consequences. Every righteous action is, as it were, a useful seed which we sow in life, and which will not fail to bear blessings. We surround ourselves with the fruits of our virtuous deeds; and from the contemplation of these arises the purest pleasure, the highest happiness—a happiness founded on self-approval.

It is possible that though enjoying this happiness we may be poor in outward possessions; it is possible that we may even lose such earthly goods as we held until then, and this may distress us; but our inward contentment it cannot disturb; our former cheerfulness will soon return, for we have not allowed ourselves to be dependant on the transient things of the world. Only he that does not know himself, and know truth, only he who places his happiness in the possession of

earthly comforts, can be deprived for ever of his peace and cheerfulness of mind, by the ruin of his earthly well-being. There have been men who have put an end to their own life with guilty hands, because their bodies could no longer secure all the enjoyments that they most coveted.

Good invariably leads to good. And the beneficent consequences are not only evinced in the cheerfulness of our minds—in the happy feeling that we are numbered among God's children, and that after this dream of life is over, a far more blissful lot awaits us—but sometimes they extend even to our earthly relations. The righteous man, the friend of humanity, the benefactor of the needy, the peacemaker, the meek in heart, is he not surrounded by the confidence and the love of all who know him? If misfortunes fall upon him, what silent, hearty sympathy beams upon him from the looks of all! How many do not wish to help him who was ever ready to help others! And the loving, thrifty, careful mother of a family, who does not value her? Who does not honour her virtuous life among her children, her friendly yet dignified conduct towards her domestics, her courtesy and desire to serve acquaintances and neighbours, her unassuming modesty, which contrasts so beautifully with the vanity, and love of display, in others?

It is God's will that what is good shall inevitably, even here below lead to good. There is no truth, therefore, which has been more fully confirmed by experience, than that virtue is the best policy. We cannot

always know what it will be most expedient to do under given circumstances; but every man knows what it is right and noble to do under all circumstances. Our understanding is ever liable to make mistakes, but the conscience seldom errs. The will to do what is best is always in our power; but the result is in the hand of God.

Therefore, if thou wouldst secure to thyself a happy fate, think not so much of the consequences of thy actions as of their character: their kindliness and righteousness. Thy power is limited; thou wilt not be able to effect more than a small portion of the good which thou wouldst fain see prevailing in the world, but each one contributes according to his capacity. One planteth, another watereth; but it is God who giveth the increase. But "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." (1 Cor. iii. 8.)

Evil, such is the Divine law, ever tends to evil, and must at last effect its own destruction. He who chooseth evil, prepareth misery for himself. Do not all the experiences of life confirm the unfailing workings of this Divine rule? Behold the ambitious man: his life is a prey to never-ending struggles and anxieties! Behold the miser: he is dying of want on his heaps of gold! Behold the voluptuary: his palid cheeks, his sunken eyes tell you of the poison that is consuming his blood and destroying his nerves! Behold the drunkard: he bears the stigma of his vice stamped upon him, and with blunted mind and senses, and tortured by disease, he hurries towards an early

grave! Behold the treacherous and malicious man: he is shunned by all, he has no friends; he falls, and all look upon his ruin as well merited! Behold the proud spendthrift: he is ruined, and is frequently obliged to beg assistance of those whom he used disdainfully to overlook!

Why is it that so few persons are neither quite happy nor quite unhappy?—Because they are not sufficiently depraved to give themselves entirely up to evil, yet have not courage enough always to act virtuously. They oscillate unsteadily between right and wrong, and, in consequence, between contentment and misery. The good which they do and which they love, brings its reward in like manner as the evil which they think or commit brings its punishment, by making them the victims of vexatious circumstances of various kinds. If thou wouldst be *thoroughly* happy thou must not be content with being only *partially* good.

The vicious are the authors of their own misery, of the diseases, of the anxieties, and despair, of which they are the prey. Who can deny this? And so the righteous may, in like manner, be the authors of an indestructible peace of mind, which is the highest happiness, and of which no human power can deprive them.

But man has the capacity to do even more than this. He is not only capable of securing unvarying inward happiness by cultivating a virtuous disposition; he is, by the wisdom of Jesus, enabled to

improve his outward circumstances also, and even if these should be very adverse, of triumphing over them. This is the highest that man can achieve on earth, and when this is accomplished, he has restored the image of God in his heart, and has raised himself above all earthly sorrows. Storms may rage around him, but he has attained a pinnacle where they cannot disturb him.

But how is he to reach this heigth? Not by ordinary cleverness—not by the prudence learnt through manifold experiences; but by the help of RELIGION; by penetrating himself with its truths, and living in accordance with them. What Jesus taught must be his thoughts. What Jesus was, he must be. Being made in the image of God, he must live in and for God only. By so doing, he will create for himself a fate that will lift him high above every earthly event.

In order to reach this divinely exalted goal, thou must accustom thyself to the thought that thy life on earth must be exclusively devoted to thy spirit; that nothing here below is truly thine own except thy immortal spirit; that thou hast to perfect thy spirit only, and that all else, rank and honours, wealth and learning, beauty and accomplishments, health and sickness, friendship and persecutions, earthly happiness and unhappiness, are only the means by which thou art to attain thy ultimate and highest object. Accustom thyself to the thought that none of the outward things which thou possessest can remain thine for ever; that they are only lent to thee; that even that which thou

hast earned by thy industry is perishable; that friends, parents, brother, sister, spouse, and child, have only a short time measured out to them to walk by thy side. Accustom thyself to the thought that thy spirit, *i. e.*, thy true self, is making but a short sojourn in this world, and must soon return home again; that thou art here only on a mission from thy Heavenly Father, to carry out His will in many things, after which thou wilt be called away. Accustom thyself to the thought that God alone is thy eternal Father; that all human spirits without exception are thy brethren; that their bodies, their social rank, &c., are but the raiments in which they must be clad during their stay on earth.

When thou art thoroughly penetrated by these sublime thoughts, which thou wilt find pervading all the teachings of Jesus, the world will assume in thine eyes a very different aspect from that in which it has hitherto appeared to thee. Thou wilt be ashamed of letting thyself be held in subjection by the temptations and desires which spring from the nature of thy body; thou wilt be ashamed of leaving the mission, with which God intrusted thee in this world, unfulfilled in order that thou mayst toy with the dust through which thou walkest; thou wilt learn to distinguish realities from mere semblances; thou wilt discern clearly that God did not send thee into this world that thou mightest learn to till fields and build houses, to fill posts of honour, or to wrap thyself in costly apparel, but to be His fellow-labourer in the work

of accomplishing the true happiness of all mankind. (1 Cor. iii. 9.) Thou wilt then understand clearly the full and deep meaning of Christ's words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. vi. 33.) Therefore, when ye have wherewithal to feed and to clothe yourselves, be content.

Thou wilt live, not in order to heap one earthly good upon another, and at length to be torn away from thy treasures by death; but to make all those who surround thee wiser and happier in as far as in thee lies. The happiness of others will ever be thy principal object; thou wilt neither know nor desire any other felicity for thyself.

Thou wilt only smile when the malignity of some treacherous mortal deprives thee of thy wealth; he merely robs thee of the means of being useful to himself and others. Thou wilt only smile when the changes that belong to all things earthly disappoint thee as to thy social position, thy influence over others, and the consideration in which thou art held. For, after all, it is of little importance whether thou be clad in fine linen and purple, or in the coarsest garb: both will eventually perish; both are of equally small value to thy spirit. Therefore, what does it signify if thou be called prince or beggar during this short dream of life; it will neither increase or diminish thy value in thine own eyes, nor give thee a higher or a lower standing in God's universe, or in the realm of spirits? That which thou art in thyself and before God, that

thou wilt remain. Verily, He, the Most High, has no respect of persons, according to the inventions of human vanity and to the measurements of human littleness.

Thou wilt only smile when sickness lays thee prostrate. Thou wilt see in this nothing more than a disordered state of an instrument which thou knewest beforehand was very frail. Perhaps God will take it from thee in order to provide thee with a more perfect one. Perhaps God would merely remind thee not to place too much value on what is perishable. Let it be sufficient for thee, that in the midst of thy bodily sufferings thou canst rejoice in the health of thy mind: thy soul has suffered no injury. Thou wilt be able to bear with calmness the death of those thou lovest best on earth. They had a vocation like thyself. The Divine mission on which they were sent into the world has only been completed a few days earlier than thine. They have reached the goal, and having finished their work, God will open for them a new and more glorious career: the same as will be opened for thee in future. Though their earthly coil may moulder in the earth, it was not this that thou didst love, but their soul, and this remains ever kindred and faithful to thee. It dwells in God, and if thou also wilt abide in the Lord, no separation will be possible. If such be thy thoughts and feelings, what event can disturb thy cheerfulness, thy peace of mind, or, in other words, thy true and lasting happiness? Hast thou not then been the author of thine own fate, in the highest sense

of the word? Art thou not placed above the reach of every earthly storm?

Such was the bliss Thou didst enjoy on earth, O Divine Jesus! Thou didst despise what was of the world, and only didst partake of it in as far as was necessary for Thy human nature and Thy activity. Thou didst love all the beings that surrounded Thee, and didst call all God's children Thy brethren. Thy mission on earth was to redeem a degenerate world from the fetters of sin and error, and to emancipate spirits from the thraldom of sensual desires; and this vocation Thou didst keep before Thine eyes in all Thy doings. That the people at one moment proclaimed Thee King of Israel, and at another stoned Thee, did not disturb Thy Divine serenity. Alas! erring humanity did not comprehend the sublimity of Thy mission and of Thy acts. Thou didst not hold it a shame to appear in the guise of a servant of all; Thou didst not call it a misfortune, that often Thou didst not know where to lay Thy head. Earthly things had no value in Thine eyes: Thy life was in Heaven. Thou didst bear scorn and persecution, and the shame of public degradation; but Thy placid conscience lifted Thee above the foolish judgments of men. In the realm of spirits, O Thou Prince of Spirits, the honour and shame that prevail are different from those conceived of by benighted, low-minded men. Thy life on earth extended over scarcely thirty-six years, but Thou didst teach men to despise death, which had no terrors for Thee. Saviour of the world, Thou didst

die, but Thy mission on earth was divinely accomplished.

Ah! let me live in Thee, and die in Thee! And through Thee learn to secure the highest bliss to myself! Amen.

GREATNESS OF SOUL.

Man's soul to more aspires
Than earth or Heaven can yield to sense;
And God who granteth his desires
Gives him a great inheritance.
He guides his earthly course
Through time, that he may be
Led to the perfect source
Of all felicity.
Till with his powers long tried,
Strength trained, and courage high
To godly deeds applied,
For these alone he'll sigh.

Then the hard task is done,
And all his soul is pure delight.
Henceforward God shall be his sun,
And shine on him in splendour bright.
"Perfection" is the palm
His own good angel brings,
And rapture swells the psalm
He to his Maker sings.
Eternally to reign
In glory all divine;
God-like thy course sustain,
While earth and time are thine!

(Matt. v. 44—48.)

I have but too often seen man in his degradation; but when have I seen him in all his dignity?

I have but too often seen him sunk in mere animal life, solely intent on gaining his bread by his labour, or on accumulating a little more property than his neighbour, or on clothing himself in finer apparel; I have seen him indifferent to every pleasure but that derived from his inflated self-conceit, or from the gratification of his palate at feasts and entertainments, or from the pride he took in having others under his command; I have seen him earnestly occupied with the improvement of his earthly condition, but completely indifferent to the improvement of his heart and character, as were this but a secondary matter; I have seen him bent upon cultivating his mind, and upon increasing his knowledge and his skill, merely for the sake of passing through the world with honour (as he terms it), as if the exalted capacities of his soul had been bestowed upon him by the Almighty for no other purpose than that he might become the most cunning, the most skilful, the most powerful, and the most dangerous of animals; I have seen him without shame, allow himself to be governed by his caprice, and give himself up without compunction to the sway of his passions, as if it were commendable not to put any restraint upon oneself, but to give the reins to one's tendencies, instincts, and desires, so as to place oneself on a level with the animals who are not endowed with, and therefore not controlled by, a rational spirit; I have seen him confessing religion, not from his heart, but in order to conform to custom and social propriety; and I have seen him, in consequence, attend church, repeat

prayers by rote, and go through the sacred performances, as if they were but so many parts of a ceremonial, which was all that was due to the Lord of the universe, the Ruler of destiny, the Judge of the quick and the dead; I have seen him use the religion of Christ as a cloak for his crimes, and as a means of pacifying his conscience, by madly making himself believe that he might rely on the atoning merits of our Lord and Saviour, and on the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for his sins, which has relieved him of all fear of condemnation and punishment.

Alas! how deeply may man not sink. He has an insatiable craving for happiness, and yet he is never happy, because he rushes with open eyes into inevitable destruction, as though he were impelled towards it by some cruel and unseen power. This power is no other than his passions, which corrupt his soul and destroy its peace and happiness.

But where shall I find man in the fulness of his dignity, as created in the image of God? Is it the Christian who, possessing intimate self-knowledge, is ever watching over himself, lest he fall into some error, and who exercises a control over all his mental emotions, which raises him far above the great multitude?

It is true he is wise and worthy of reverence who is able to resist the allurements of sensual pleasures, and who, having emancipated himself from the power of the passions, such as ambition, vanity, voluptuousness, and anger, stands forth a free man among slaves, a king among subjects! He is worthy of reverence

because no outward might can subdue him, no joy can make him lose his self-possession, no misfortune can prostrate him: he stands unshaken in the midst of storms, forcing everything to bend to him, because he remains master of his inclinations and his emotions, and never allows them to influence his decisions. He is more worthy of admiration than he who subjugates nations by the help of other nations, but who cannot conquer himself; more worthy of admiration than the greatest of artists and scholars, who produce works at which the world is astounded, but who are unable to establish lasting peace and happiness in their own minds.

But is self-control the highest degree of perfection which man can reach?

Nay, where this so, then Jesus, the God-like Enlightener of the world, would not have taught or preached higher virtue than many of the sages of antiquity. Even before Jesus Christ appeared upon earth, the wisest and most virtuous of men had taught that self-knowledge and self-control are the necessary conditions of human dignity; and, moreover, in their own noble lives they set the most touching example of these virtues, and proved that they are not above the capacity of man, but that every mortal may exercise them. They did this, and to this day the world honours the names of these truly excellent men. O Christians! who slavishly and cowardly shrink from the performance of these heavenly duties, those men practised these virtues, though Christ had not yet

appeared in the world, and notwithstanding that they had but obscure and vague presentiments of eternity and retribution, of which we have, through Divine revelation, obtained awful but rapturous certainty. They practised these virtues, yet they were but heathens—and you are Christians!

But Jesus, the Exalted, brought with Him into the world the light of heavenly wisdom, and He demanded higher things of man.

He also demanded that we should seek to attain self-knowledge, and that we should probe our own hearts. He also demanded that we should practise self-control and self-abnegation, because he who does not hold his lusts and passions in check will be overpowered by them, and cannot be a follower of Jesus. But even the heathens did this. They spared their enemies, they endeavoured to make their friends happy, they abhorred the intemperance of the glutton, the drunkard, and the voluptuary, and the immoderate desires of the over-ambitious; they despised the folly of the proud and of the miserly, the insatiable cravings of the covetous, and the meanness of the self-seeking. But all this does not constitute the special virtue of the Christian.

Jesus demanded more of man. He demanded of us that we should become LIKE UNTO GOD: He demanded the highest magnanimity of soul of which mortals are capable.

It is not enough, He said, to conquer your anger: nay, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you,

do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans [heathens] the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans [heathens] so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 44—48.)

Such is the mental elevation which the Heaven-sent Messiah demands of us. It is not sufficient that we exercise even such perfect self-control as will prevent our feelings and tendencies from leading us into any wrong doing, we must go further and spread blessings and well-being around us, as far as our power extends. To be virtuous it is not enough to exercise such control over ourselves as never to neglect or to transgress a duty: he only is virtuous who, without reference to any outward considerations, without respect of persons, does good, increases the general happiness, and confers benefits even on his enemies.

This is Christian greatness of soul: this is the summit of earthly perfection! The truly wise man—and only the holy follower of Jesus is truly wise—feels himself elevated above the plots and machinations and passions of common life, and seeks only to impart happiness, where others inflict injury from low selfish-

ness. He is raised above offences and enmities: he does not allow himself to be prevented thereby from doing good to those who hate him. His revenge is to forgive and forget. He is elevated above the petty objects of ordinary men, whose highest endeavours are directed towards, and whose greatest happiness consists in, the attainment of some worldly advantage, some sensuous enjoyment. His highest object is to be at one with God. Ever watchful of himself, in order to keep his heart pure from evil, he does not hate those who fail, but looks upon them as what they really are, as persons sick in mind, whose bodies oppress and govern their souls; as madmen, whose darkened intellects have marked out a false goal for themselves, and who are mistaken in the means by which they seek to attain it. But he does not hate them: he only pities them, and endeavours by promoting true enlightenment to diminish and to counteract the evil. He is elevated above selfishness and self-seeking. He does not strive to be the best of men in order to be the most honoured: if this were his motive, he could no longer be so purely good. He does not do right for the sake of a higher reward: if he did this, his virtue would no longer be virtue, but calculating selfishness. He loves virtue because it is Divine. He wishes to be perfect, because his Father in Heaven is perfect. He wishes to be at one with God, because his spirit emanates from God, and aspires towards the exalted source of its being.

This is the true magnanimity of heart and mind

which Jesus demands of His disciples. Love and well-doing is its essence, and modest meekness its veil. It strives after the highest goal, and therefore looks upon all that is born of the earth and will return again to earth as the lowest. It feels that man's true home is in eternity, and therefore sees in this earthly life only the first step in his endless career. It honours human laws and institutions as means of securing general well-being; but truth, justice, and goodness, it places above all human rules and regulations—unlike most mortals, who, in the splendour of their own self-invented means, forget the sublime but distant object for which they are instituted. God is everything to it in this world, because God dwells in all things, and all things are in God. It loves this life, because it is existence in God; but it recoils not from death, which is a mere transition to another mode of existence.

O Jesus, such is the religion, the revelation, which Thou didst vouchsafe to man! Such greatness of soul is a fruit of the Christian faith. But what am I? Nay, I cannot as yet call myself a Christian! What faith has been mine? I cannot say that I have held fast the Christian faith, for my religion has been a cowardly vacillation between sin and virtue, between God and mere earthly objects. O Jesus, Thy holy word falls like a ray of light into my heart, and I now see more clearly the meaning of Thy heavenly doctrine: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

Christian magnanimity of soul does not consist in

total neglect and suppression of all bodily wants and desires, or in entire renunciation of all the earthly joys of life. Nay, my body is an instrument lent to me by God, through which I am to influence, and work upon, the world around me; and this instrument I must not hold light, nor must I neglect it. If I did this, I should deprive my spirit of the medium through which it is to effect even its own improvement. But I must never forget that the body is but a tool. When I have taken care that it shall be healthy, strong, firm, agile, and skilful in many ways, I have done for it all that is required. Its outward beauty and adornment are matters of secondary importance. I must attach no great value to these, and must take heed that strength and health be not sacrificed for their attainment. For he who handles the tool is of far more importance than the tool itself; and the Christian willingly sacrifices his body, if it be necessary for the attainment of his highest object—universal happiness. Be it sickness, or wounds, or suffering, or death, a magnanimous Christian holds these light when there is a question of saving the higher goods—truth, right, faith, innocence, and human happiness.

The Christian's greatness of soul does not consist in proud disdain of all life's joys; but to him that possesses such greatness, these joys are no more than a means of refreshing the body, so as to enable it to continue its work with renewed vigour; and he thinks it contemptible to be always hunting after sensuous pleasures, and to seek recreation when no labour has

been performed. He never lets a day pass without gracing it with some good deed: he is ready to sacrifice every pleasure, if he can thereby increase the well-being of others. It is a luxury to him to submit to privations, and even to suffering, when he can secure thereby the happiness of others.

Riches, honours, and public esteem are not valueless in his eyes, but neither are they objects which he would purchase at any price. All these advantages, which ordinary men idolize, can neither make nor mar the contentment of the Christian sage. To him they are but auxiliary means for the achievement of his great task, the good of humanity. He knows full well how little public esteem is to be relied on; how ambiguous are marks of honour; and that not all the gold in the world can secure lasting inward bliss. He is always ready to renounce fame, if he can thereby increase the peace and happiness of the human family. He is ever ready to sacrifice his fortune, if he can thereby diminish the sufferings of man.

That which comes from the earth, he values as of the earth, and even the world's most brilliant prizes seem to him not worth a sigh. Of what importance can it be to him to renounce, a few days or a few years sooner or later, that which he knows he must eventually give up? But when we do give it up, let it be for a noble cause. The largest sum of gold is not worth as much as the consciousness of having performed one great and godlike action, and it is less painful to sacrifice life than our inward purity.

Christian greatness of soul does not consist in refusing to defend our own rights, or those of others, when they are threatened. All rights conceded to us or to others by society are so many conditions for acquiring, practising, and retaining the means of useful activity. He who from mistaken or malignant motives destroys these conditions, must be earnestly but gently recalled to a sense of his duty. In general, such an invader of our rights is called an enemy; but the true Christian has no enemies. He may be despised, persecuted, or envied; but even while defending himself and his rights, he remains the friend of his opponent. He does not shun him with displeasure, but respects him as heretofore, and assists him, and is kind to him whenever an opportunity occurs. And, finally, if no other alternative should be open to him than the hard one of either doing wrong or suffering wrong, he does not hesitate to select the latter.

For Christian greatness of soul manifests itself, above all, in never failing love of God and love of man—a love which no ingratitude can destroy, which makes no difference between friend and foe, and which is revealed in deeds more than in words. The Christian who has reached this sublime height endeavours at every moment of his life, and under all circumstances, to do his best, and to be as useful to others as his power and capacity will admit of. And whatever he does, he prefers to do in secret, and not before the eyes of men; yet he does not shun publicity even, if he

sees that his example may be *useful in stimulating* others to like conduct.

Whatever may be the position in which God's providence places him, such a Christian's wish and endeavour is to act up to his own highest ideal. Indeed, he not only wills so to do, but he does it, for with him will and action are one. But he conceals his own worth under a veil of modesty; for what he is and what he does, he is not and does not for the sake of human approval, for the sake of winning the applause of weak mortals, who are too apt to praise even that which is no more than the duty of every upright person. A deed done for the reward of approbation it may bring, deserves the contempt of the truly wise and good. Of such deeds God keeps no account. It is, on the contrary, the highest distinction of true greatness of soul to be ready to make every sacrifice for the happiness of others, though this self-immolation may never be known to mortal being. The true Christian sees no reason to doubt that others act from noble motives, though they reach not always the goal they aim at; for he knows that he himself has still to combat many weaknesses; but he feels ashamed at being commended for that which is simply the performance of his duty, and the more so as such praise proves that those who dispense it have little claim to respect. For he who thinks the mere fulfilment of duty worthy of eulogy, gives evidence that he does not attend very strictly to the performance of his own. And what value has panegyric coming from unworthy lips?

But even were shame, persecution, dungeons, and scaffolds to be the consequences of a virtuous life, virtue is its own reward; dungeons and scaffolds pass away; the soul of the righteous is free; it feels not the weight of the fetters that oppress the body. Death on the scaffold for a holy cause, or death on the field of battle—wherein doth it differ from death on a bed of sickness? Does the pillow on which the dying head rests make any difference to a spirit that lives in God, for God, and with God? How many noble souls, whose memory is consecrated by the tears of grateful posterity, did not give up their lives under the executioner's axe, and amid the imprecations of their contemporaries! Not what others think of us, but what we are in ourselves, ought to be of importance to us. The character of our actions, not men's judgments of them, is the thing we have to look to. The former only is our own; the latter depends upon outward circumstances. The former alone affects our dignity, influences our growth in perfection, and our happiness; the latter hardly affects even our outward circumstances. Here on earth the same oblivion soon embraces alike the murderer and the murdered. But God lives, God judges!

Thou livest, O Eternal Upholder of all things! Thou judgest, O All-righteous Judge! What is my body when dead?—A discarded garment. What is sensuous life when it is concluded?—An ever-changing dream, the events of which fade away as we awake. I am a spirit, and all else that clings to me is not mine;

but of the dignity and power which my spirit has acquired through its activity on earth, it cannot be stripped by the hand of death; for such dignity and power are inherent in that only which is imperishable, immortal, and which belongs not to earth.

To strive after greatness of soul is the highest aim of a rational, God-created being; and this aim is not beyond the reach of man. For even Jesus was not only apparently a man, yet He performed the most exalted actions to prove, that to an earnest will, the greatest perfection is attainable. And, inspired by His words and His example, thousands of others have followed in His footsteps. They have resolutely, and without repining, sacrificed fortune, friendship, love, power, freedom, and life itself, for right and truth, for innocence and virtue, for their country, and for the happiness of their fellow-men. Why should I not be able to do what they have done? Why should it be impossible because thousands of other men, held in the trammels of their sensuous being, doubt that such deeds can be done, or call such actions foolish enthusiasm? What is the judgment of men sunk in sensuality and base selfishness, compared to the judgment of God in my conscience? Though they may be unable to see that that which is of the earth is but dust and ashes; though they may be incapable of sacrificing the perishable for the imperishable, this is no reason why I should be equally degenerate. O Jesus Christ! Perfect and Divine Man! Ensample of what spirits ought to attain to in this world! Thou in whom

I behold God and nature united! Thou who art one and the same with God and nature!—hast Thou not set me an example? The world of men that surrounded Thee understood Thee not, O Holy Power of God! They looked to dust and ashes; to outward might and social relations. Thou didst smilingly spurn with Thy foot the earth and its perishable concerns, holding in view only the relation between Thee and Thy Father.

I will be as Thou wert, O Jesus! When an infant I was consecrated in baptism as a follower of Thine, and, true to the baptismal vows made for me, I will walk in Thy footsteps; I will study Thy life and Thy doctrines; I will leave naught undone to attain greatness of soul, spiritual freedom, and likeness to God! The struggle with my sensuous desires and tendencies will often be a hard one; but God will give me strength and courage to persevere. Amen!

THAT WHICH IS OF GOD MUST ULTIMATELY TRIUMPH.

Hark! from the deep abyss
Resounds the victory-song of highest bliss!
Of all God's sons the glorious jubilee.
Where now shall the false deities be found?
Death's terrors? All in peace lie hushed and bound,
And stilled the triumph of their mockery.
So had the rebel ones, the powers of hell,
Thus sank in deep despair, been silenced never,
But power Divine, which every foe can quell,
O'er the destroyers has prevailed for ever.

Higher, and yet still higher,
Devotion, let thine altar-flames aspire!
He from the darkness of the tomb is risen;
He lent His body to the dust to save
His holy ones, and sanctify the grave.
And now the chains of death for aye are riven.
Henceforth, ye graves, 'neath angels' watching laid,
The resurrection's seed your bounds contain—
What is divine, what God hath holy made,
Victorious over all, in life shall reign.

(Matt. xxviii. 11—15.)

Sometimes when I reflect on the noble life of Jesus, I ask myself, But how is it possible that all the world should not have loved this heavenly character whose

heart was so full of love for all? Why did His contemporaries persecute Him, when even His judges feared to condemn Him? What evil had He done? He taught peace and concord, and self-denial and entire devotion to the will of God, that is, to all that is virtuous and good. He lived a life of extreme humility, and envied not the great, transgressed no law of the land; giving joy to others, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowing, and restoring the lost happiness of many families, he walked almost joyless through a world which misjudged Him to the very last.

How is it possible that He who was so simple and true, could be misjudged? What was His crime, that His fellow-citizens, or at least by far the greater number of them, should persecute Him even unto death?

If Jesus, the Messiah, had appeared in our day; if He had lived and taught in the midst of us, would scorn, disdain, and persecution have been His reward, as it was in those days?

I would fain answer, nay; so inhuman, so barbarous, so utterly unfeeling the present generation is not; nay, such injustice our judges, our rulers, could not allow to be done by others, and still less could they be guilty of it themselves.

I would fain speak thus. But then, when I consider that man has, at all times and among all nations, ever shown himself the same as regards his violent and selfish passions; when I call to mind the murders and other terrible deeds which we have witnessed even in

our own day; when I recollect how* thousands of innocent victims of the highest rank, as well as of the lowest, have been dragged to the scaffold on mere suspicion, or on account of their opinions only, I shudder, and am forced to confess that even among us, in the present day, Jesus the sinless would not be secure. Among us also He would find sanguinary persecutors, traitors, merciless accusers, and judges who desecrate justice by holding a human life in small account, if they consider it their interest to sacrifice it. Nay, my Jesus, even amongst us Thou wouldst not have been safe; and the very persons who now kneel before Thee in temples which they have reared to Thee, and who pray to Thee with fervour, because they tremble before Thee as the Judge of the World, would attack Thee as an enthusiast or a revolutionist, as a blasphemer and heretic, as an enemy of the existing state of things, a fearful innovator, wert Thou to appear amongst us in Thy unpretending simplicity, full of the Divine Spirit in word and action, but in the lowly garb of one of the humble classes of the people. For as of yore, so to-day, mortals judge according to appearances. And as of yore, so to-day, unbending pride and all-sacrificing selfishness wage war against everything that is opposed to their interests.

I cannot, therefore, extol the present times above those in which the Saviour lived. I am forced to confess with failing heart, that on the day of judg-

* During the French Revolution.

ment, the voice may be heard addressing us also, and saying: "I have been among you and you refused to acknowledge me; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; I was naked, and ye clothed me not; I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." And many of our number will cry as the men spoken of in the Gospel: "Lord, when saw we Thee?" And He will answer and say: "Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matt. xxv. 33—45.)

Yea, even in this day Christ is among us, and we know Him not. Animated by His benevolent spirit, many a friend of humanity endeavours to promote what is good; but is slandered and persecuted because what he proposes is in opposition to the worldly interests of some mighty personage. Animated by the spirit of Jesus, many a wise man seeks to establish truth and justice upon earth; but he is railed at as an impudent innovator and reformer, because others fear that his teachings will lower the consideration in which they themselves are held. Animated by the spirit of Jesus, many a virtuous man is willing to sacrifice himself for the common welfare, but the selfish world calls his noble disinterestedness foolish enthusiasm, or hypocritical craftiness, and refuses to believe that a man of humble origin, of small means, and in lowly garb, is capable of more sublime acts than the high and mighty.

In like manner the greater number of benefactors of mankind have from the earliest ages ever been despised and disowned by the generation among which

they lived: they were objects of scorn or abomination to the great and learned filled with pharisaical conceit, or to the blind multitude sunk in ignorance; chains and dungeons have been their lot, the cup of poison or the martyr's stake their reward.

For those who wisely and earnestly, and full of God-like zeal, declare war against the crimes and vices of common life, convert the sinful world into an implacable enemy. Those who in mental power and insight are far in advance of their times, and who endeavour to lift up poor degraded humanity to their own level, are not understood, but are misjudged and slandered. Those who would banish from the world all wrongdoing and injustice, must expect to be objects of vengeance to those who live by the spoils of iniquity. The industrious hand that would clear the garden of the Lord of hurtful weeds, must expect to be stung and wounded by the nettles and the thorns which it endeavours to uproot.

In proportion to the depression which these reflections must cause to a pious mind, that delights in all excellence, must be the quickening and soul-elevating consolation afforded by the great event, the commemoration of which we celebrate on Easter Sunday.

Jesus Messiah was dead! His friends, dispersed and discouraged, wept in secret the tears of unconquerable grief. But the spirit of hell rejoiced, for the Messiah was no more. The Scribes and the Pharisees looked down triumphantly from the altitude of their pride, for He whom they so much feared had bled

to death on the cross: His holy heart had ceased to beat. He lay buried in the rocky cavern, a prey to corruption. Even His ashes they would not give up to those that loved Him; and a great stone was therefore rolled before the entrance to the grave-vault, and it was furthermore sealed up.

But, to their terror and surprise, an earthquake shook the proud palaces of Jerusalem, and opened the graves. Jesus the Messiah was no longer to be found in the vault of the dead: He walked openly through the land, and appeared before His beloved ones. Trembling with fear, the soldiers who had been set to watch the body and the tomb, the stone and the seals, fled into the holy city. Levites and high-priests heard the wonderful tidings. Their pride refused to believe, and they denied it.

But in vain was their denial. They held counsel with the elders of the city. In vain; for what can the councils of men effect against the judgments of God? They gave the soldiers money that they might say that His disciples had come in the night and stolen the body while they slept. In vain; the dumb stones spoke. The witnesses spoke, who had met Him after He had risen from the dead. The miracles wrought on earth spoke; the action of Heaven through the entire history of the world gave evidence. Christ had arisen. The disciples saw Him, took courage again, and believed. Filled with a high and holy joy, they visited all parts of the earth, and preached the doctrine of Him who had risen from the dead.

The symbol of His ignominious death on Golgotha became the sign of the triumph of the Church universal. Kings and peoples worshipped the exalted One, and His name became their highest glory, and Jesus' words of redemption sounded through the high places of the world, through the burning deserts of the South, through the ice-fields of the North, and reached far distant realms, and islands beyond the vast world-ocean.

In vain does the power of man struggle against that which comes from God. THAT WHICH IS DIVINE CAN NEVER BE DESTROYED. Though it may for a time be suppressed, be of good cheer; it will triumph at last. The grave itself will become a monument of glory, and the instruments of torture will become trophies of victory.

Therefore, be of good cheer, O ye of little faith, who venture into the turmoil of the world full of virtuous resolutions, but who soon retire trembling before the storm of envy, before the scornful laughter of the sinful, before the anger of roused selfishness; and who, though desirous of acting nobly, are equally desirous of not displeasing your fellow-men. No man can serve two masters! If thou hast commended thy concerns to Heaven, what hast thou to demand of the world? If thou wouldst serve the cause of God, what is to thee the hatred of the enemies of virtue?

Take courage, O noble and virtuous man, who, led by holy convictions, wouldst fain do good and improve the condition and happiness of the human race.

Complete thy work: hope for the encouraging blessing of a few noble-minded men only, while the great multitude will hoot at thee, and in its ignorance and selfishness will persecute thee with hatred. And shouldst thou fall—shouldst thou become the victim of malignant opponents—what wilt thou have lost? Thy earthly happiness may be destroyed, but not the great ideas for which thou didst sacrifice the comforts and pleasures of life. Thy blood may flow at the hands of murderers, but thy spirit will soar triumphantly above the world. Champion of virtue, give up thyself, but not the holy cause of humanity, not that which is Divine in thy convictions. These cannot be destroyed, for God upholds them!

That which is Divine cannot be extinguished! It will have to struggle against the hostile influences of this world, but it will triumph at last.

We learn this from the wonderful event which every Christian joyfully commemorates on Easter Sunday; and we learn it from many scarcely less wonderful events in the world's history. This fact is the most exalted and most indubitable proof which we have that a Divine Providence rules above.

Truth is Divine. For God is the Spirit of truth. And never has a truth perished out of the world, however violently, however long, the nations or their rulers may have struggled against it. It has ever risen above the power of every obstruction, and, though perhaps after long ages of combat, has finally triumphed all the more gloriously.

Every new truth is more or less in conflict with the cherished objects and the deep-rooted prejudices of certain classes, or at all events with their received opinions and established customs. It has therefore to sustain a hard struggle against the circumstances of the times. It is a lump of leaven, which causes the whole mass to ferment in secret. But this very fermentation is a precursor of the inevitable victory; it is a dissolving and separating of that which has grown old and useless, to make way for that which is newer and better. Truth triumphs, though often above the graves of those who first proclaimed and defended it.

Therefore tremble not before the power of earthly tyrants, who, fearing the light, would fain continue to reign in darkness, and in consequence, prepare exile, prisons, and scaffolds, for the witnesses of truth. That which is spiritual cannot be destroyed with earthly weapons. Fear may for a time lame all tongues; but no power can stay the silent activity of the mind. No mortal, even were all the crowns of the earth gathered on his head, rules the spiritual world: there God's sceptre alone holds sway! Herod once in cruel madness ordered all the children in Bethlehem to be murdered; and yet to this day, two thousand years after the event, a redeemed world celebrates the triumph of the truths taught by the Child of Bethlehem, whose death the wicked king tried to compass. High-priests and scribes defended with the utmost fury the laws of Moses and the traditional reverence of the people for

the sacred places of Jerusalem, against the preachers of the Gospel; but Jerusalem and her temples were reduced to ruins, and the followers of Moses were dispersed through the world, and the Gospel of Jesus has become the pride of the most civilized portion of the human race.

Full of indignation against eternal truth, the priests of the heathen deities struggled valiantly against the first followers of Jesus. The Roman emperors proceeded with ruthless fury against the contemners of the old-established national religion, and the false altars. In vain. These altars were dashed to pieces; the power of Rome, before which the world had trembled, was laid prostrate in the dust; and above the graves of the murdered disciples of Jesus rose the temples of the One true God.

That which is Divine cannot perish; and Divine is the innocence and righteousness of every virtuous man. For God is the Father of righteousness, the Holiest of Beings.

The shortsightedness and passionate impulsiveness of men render it impossible for them at all times and at once to recognise the full value of what is right and good. As each man has experiences and views different from those of others, and as it is in accordance with these that he judges what he sees, he generally pronounces that false, erroneous and bad, which does not harmonize with his previous notions. When to this is added the melancholy tendency in human nature to be more prone to believe evil of others than good,

it is easy to understand how even the most righteous men come to be misjudged, and how the innocent become objects of calumny, and of the most unmerited hatred.

Unfortunately, the virtue of common-place persons is rarely strong enough to resist unexpected storms. They cannot bear persecution even for the sake of a righteous cause. Their hearts are either filled with cowardice, and they desert the good cause in order not to lose the favour of impotent man, and thus renounce virtue in order not to renounce their comforts; or they fall into the opposite error, of hating, and bitterly despising their fellow-men. Thus many have by their uncalled-for violence and passionate temperament placed impediments in the way of the good they sought to promote, and which others opposed out of narrow-minded ignorance. Thus many a good man, who would willingly have sacrificed himself for virtue, had his honest intentions but been recognised by others, has become discouraged and indifferent, or, despairing of convincing his narrow-hearted and selfish neighbours of the excellence of the object he held in view, he has sunk down to the level of those whom formerly he despised with full right.

But this is not the mode of action of the true Christian, who walks in the path of the great Teacher, whose example is ever before him. He does not forget what Jesus, the Righteous, bore for the sake of righteousness. He does not forget that his Master voluntarily suffered death to promote the welfare of

mankind, and how other great and good men, filled with the spirit of Jesus, followed in His footsteps. He does not forget that perseverance leads to success, and that what is right, and truly good, and Divine can never perish. He does not forget the words which Jesus has left as an encouragement to those who would follow Him in the thorny path of self-sacrifice, for the welfare of others: "Fear not those who can only kill the body!" Indeed, what is life compared to the triumph of virtue? To die for the good of mankind is a far more desirable fate than that of living a few short days longer, with the consciousness and shame of having acted like a coward.

That which is of God can never perish! Defy all threats and tortures, O ye righteous ones, whom the world condemns, and rejoice in your sublime calling to suffer for virtue. Ye are walking in the thorny but glorious path of Jesus. Not to every one was this happiness given by the combination of circumstances and events. However bitterly the evil-disposed may rail against you, your innocence is a Heavenly shield which will turn off every barb aimed at your hearts. Fight out the battle to the last, shielded by your innocence, and keeping your eyes fixed on God in Heaven, and you will win the crown of eternal life and glory. By acting thus I will prove myself Thy disciple, O Jesus, Thou who hast risen from the dead. Thy life shall be my mirror, Thy death my salvation, and Thy resurrection shall be to me a sign of the imperishable nature of all that comes from God. Should I renounce

virtue because of poverty, or of the scorn and hatred of the evil-minded? Ah, no! even poverty and scorn are not so bitter as death. But should I, even to avoid death, renounce the cause of virtue? Nay; because virtue, that which is Divine, is eternal, and my spirit also is eternal. My spirit also comes from God, partakes of the Divine nature, and cannot perish.

Yea, I also shall rise from the dead; my spirit also shall one day, when the veil of dust is rent in which God has clothed it, go forth to greater glory; and if it has remained worthy of its exalted origin, the hand of God will array it in a new and more glorious garb.

Son of the Eternal, Thou didst rise triumphantly above the grave and above earthly death. I also, a child like Thee of the Eternal Father, shall one day rise victoriously above my lifeless corpse. And while the tears of my earthly kindred fall upon the deserted clay, my enraptured spirit will soar towards my Heavenly kindred, to celebrate more worthily with them the triumph of the Divine in the universe.

Father, mother, why stand ye so pale and full of lamentations by the bier of your beloved child? Has Christ not risen? Can the Divine principle perish which once animated the dust above which ye now sorrow so bitterly? Pious daughter, noble son, why grieve so unceasingly for your departed father, your tender mother? Why weep because that which is Divine returns triumphantly into the bosom of the Deity? In like manner Jesus, having completed His task in life, returned to the Heavenly abodes. In like

manner the Divine spark in thee will, perhaps sooner than thou dost expect, return to the source of all blessedness.

Every righteous endeavour here below is a triumph of that which is Heavenly over that which is earthly; is an exchange of earthly thraldom for Heavenly freedom; is a victory of life over death.

Did not the disciples of Jesus cease to weep when they found his rock tomb open, and behold their Master again wonderfully transfigured? When they saw Him again for one brief moment only, as in a dream, after which He disappeared from among them, because His work was done? Disconsolate parents, orphans, husbands, wives, and friends, those for whom ye weep no longer sleep in the tomb. The Lord of Life hath called them back into His bosom, in order to render still more perfect the bliss you will experience in the hour of death, when you have completed your virtuous career on earth. Would you not suffer more painfully when taking your last farewell of this world, if you had to leave behind you those you so dearly loved?

Jesus, Thou hast risen from the dead, and Thou art my light and my comfort. Thy victory is my victory; Thy death is my immortality; Thy resurrection my triumph.

FINIS.

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